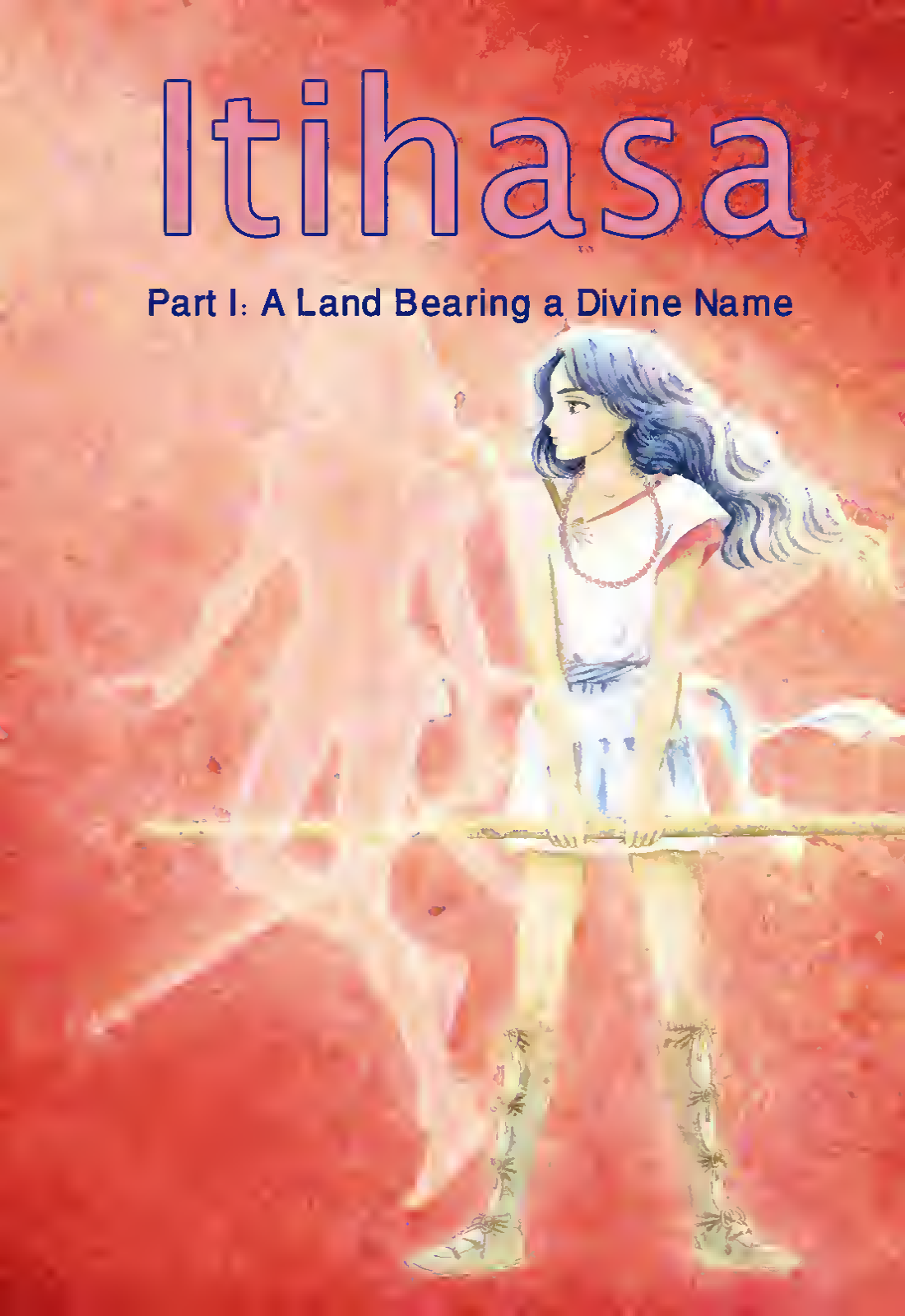
Itihasa 3

Wakako Mizuki

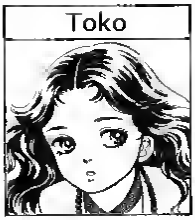
Itihasa

Part I: A Land Bearing a Divine Name



Recap & MainCharac-ters

This strange tale begins with Takaya (then age seven) finding a newborn baby. The baby is already turning cold, but the people in Takaya's tribe save it with a mysterious mantra and the power of a yang stone. The wisdom for using the power of words and nature in this way has been given to them by the gods that cannot be seen, and the tribe lives by the teachings of these gods. The baby is given the name Toko and is raised as Takaya's



sister. At this time, the Oracle tells everyone about an ominous prophecy made by an oracle two generations earlier: "The two great continents will be reduced to dust and then, after a great flood, gods that can be seen will appear in foreign lands everywhere, and the world will fall into chaos..." Seven years later, the tribe suddenly falls victim to this prophecy. While Aohiko, Takaya, and Toko go into the mountains to look for a yang stone, the tribe is attacked by a faction under Kiyu the Silver Horned God. The children are kidnapped, and everyone else is killed. The faction then disappears through the torii (meant to act as a portal for the gods that cannot be seen.) As the Oracle takes her last breaths, she tells Takaya and Toko to "preserve the sacred treasures and wisdom of the gods that cannot be seen." Perceiving that Toko has the aptitude for becoming an oracle, she says the wisdom should first be passed on to Toko. But, wanting Toko to enjoy a normal life, Takaya hides these last words from Aohiko. The gods that can be seen are divided into (benevolent) demigods and (evil) demon gods, and Kiyu the Silver Horned God is a demon god. The three survivors later encounter the demigod Risson, God of the True Law, and his warriors (including Katsura and Ichirota), who are pursuing the demon gods. Ichirota shows animosity toward the three followers of the gods that cannot be seen, especially toward Aohiko. While Katsura is also put off by Aohiko's pacifism, her attraction to his indescribable charm wins out. Ichirota's aggressiveness seems to be rooted in his shadowy past. A few days later, warrior after warrior succumbs to pain caused by mushrooms they ate before arriving there. Sought out by Chief Yoshikage for his wisdom in treating diseases, Aohiko uses a mantra to draw out the power of the sacred bead necklace (made from yang stones) in an effort to save them. When Aohiko and Takaya become exhausted from chanting the mantra non-stop for two days and nights, Toko--who has learned the mantra just by listening to them--comes to their aid, and everyone is saved. Takaya is surprised at how quickly she learned the mantra and fears that Toko is destined to inherit the wisdom of the gods that cannot be seen. Although Aohiko was planning to part ways with the group and embark on a journey to spread the wisdom of the gods that cannot be seen, Risson, who has observed the success of the trio through clairvoyance, uses his psychic power to make Aohiko believe he has decided to go with the group of his own free will. Both the demigods and demon gods have been craving the wisdom of the gods that cannot be seen as their fate hangs in the balance. After saying farewell to the land they have come to call home, the party takes off on a journey in pursuit of the demon gods. During the journey, Toko witnesses Ichirota strangle a bird to death in the forest, with a cruel smile on his face. Ichirota threatens to kill her if she talks. Toko, however, thinks she sees tears in his eyes and doesn't tell anyone. Later, Toko has a dream in which she strangles a bird, leaving her with a sense of foreboding. Resolving to become strong to protect Toko, Takaya goes through extensive training and quickly grows in strength. One day, Toko realizes that the power of the bead necklace is returning. At that moment, she responds to the power and shape of the beads (now called magatama) and has an inexplicable vision in which she turns into a baby, a fetus, an embryo, a DNA strand, a molecule, an atom, and is finally assimilated into the universe. Time passes, and it is spring. One day, when Toko and Aohiko go far from the camp to practice a special mantra, they run into a lone demon god. The demon god causes Aohiko to fall off a cliff and manipulates Koma and his two friends to seriously injure Takaya. After Ichirota rushes to the scene, the demon god wistfully calls out to him, using the name "Nachi," and tempts him to return to Kiyu. It is revealed that Ichirota was once a follower of the demon gods. Risson comes just in the nick of time and banishes the demon god, but Takaya is critically injured. Aohiko is also on the verge of death when Risson discovers him and carries him to a cave. Risson's power is said to be ineffective against human affliction. Will he be able to save Aohiko...? Meanwhile, after sobbing uncontrollably over the dying Takaya, Toko starts to chant a mantra that will transfer her life force to him to save his life. As a result, Takaya revives while Toko's body turns as cold as ice.

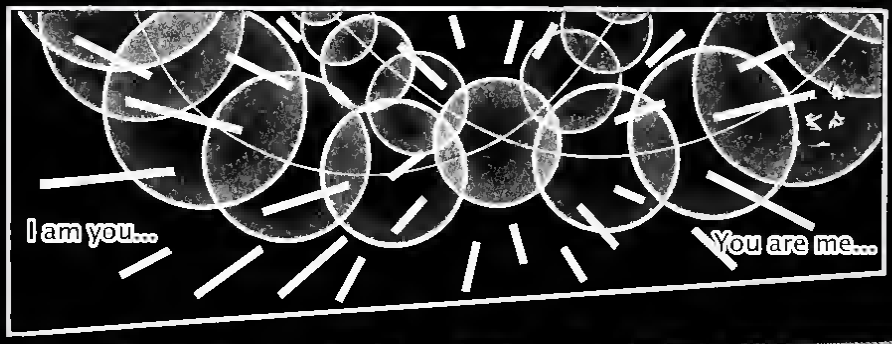
"Mantra: a mysterious spell received from the gods that cannot be seen. Yang stone: a special stone that has positive energy (ying stones have the opposite kind of energy). Its power is manifested through the use of mantras. Sacred treasures: a sword, a bead

Takaya...
Where are you...?

Come here...
Takaya...
Come here...
My body's frozen...
I can't move...
Takaya!
Takaya!?

Who...!?

We're...
...not supposed
to meet.
But if you die,
I'll die too...
So don't die...
I'll warm you up...


I am you...
You are me...

I've wanted to meet you...
This will be the first and last time...

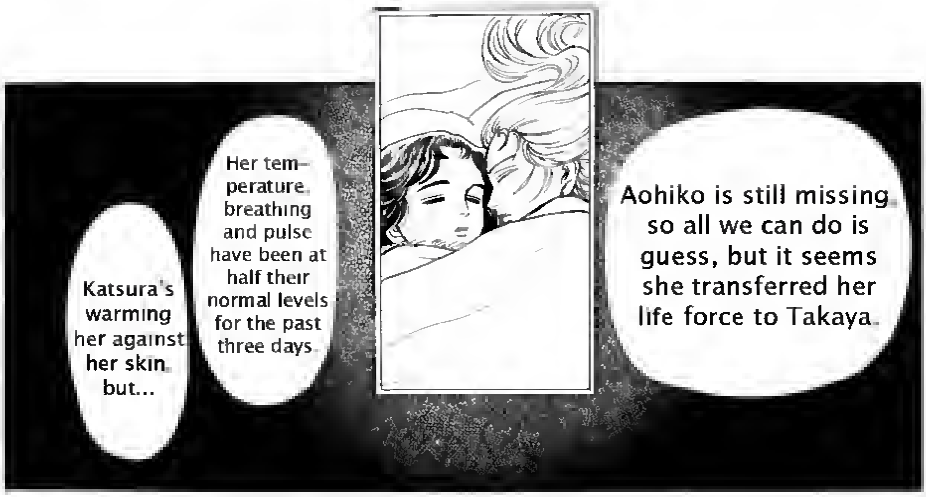
...I'll kill you...
If we meet again...

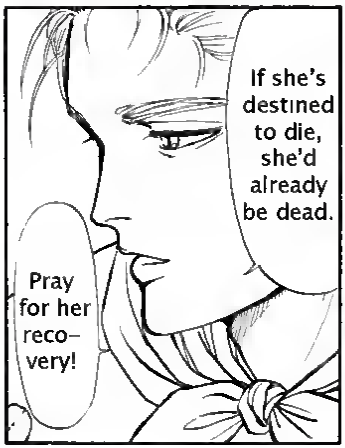
...and you'll kill me...

That is our... destiny...

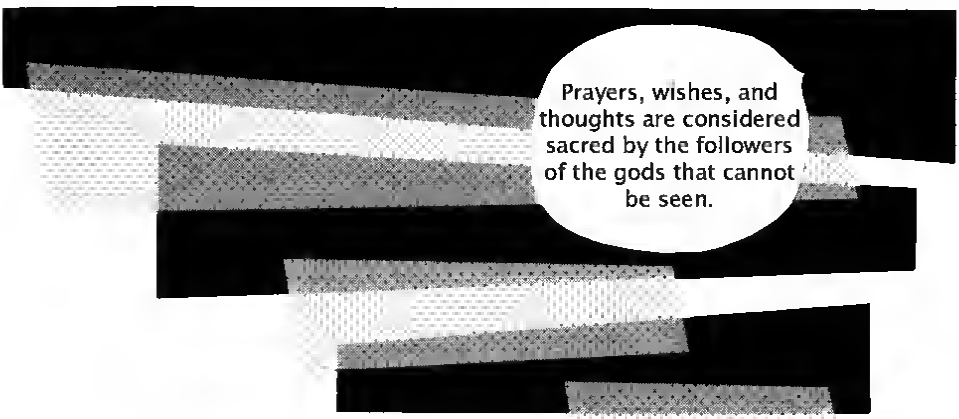
Ichirota found Koma.
He's very weak. He apparently hasn't eaten or drunk anything for the last three days...
Walk properly!
SOB...
I-I ...
I...
We split up...
Where are Ino and Toji?

You're lucky you didn't run that far.
You can ask for Takaya's forgiveness and start over again.
What would you have done if Ichirota hadn't found you!?
Just die in a ditch like a dog!?
So Takaya's alive...
He's survived so far thanks to Toko's mantra.
Toko?
What about Toko !?
He hasn't come to yet, but he's doing better than Toko.

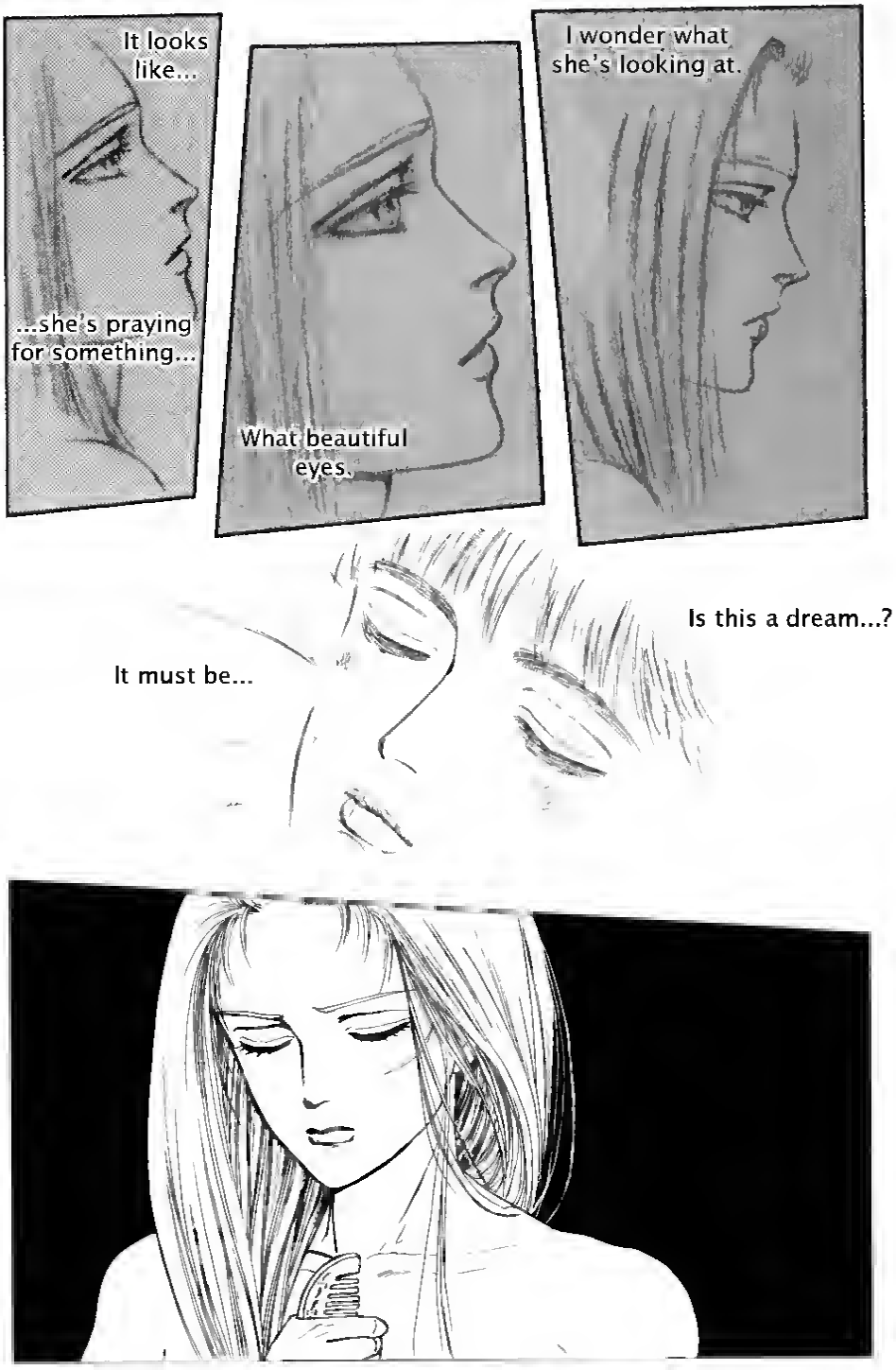

Katsura's warming her against her skin but...
Her temperature, breathing and pulse have been at half their normal levels for the past three days.
Aohiko is still missing, so all we can do is guess, but it seems she transferred her life force to Takaya.

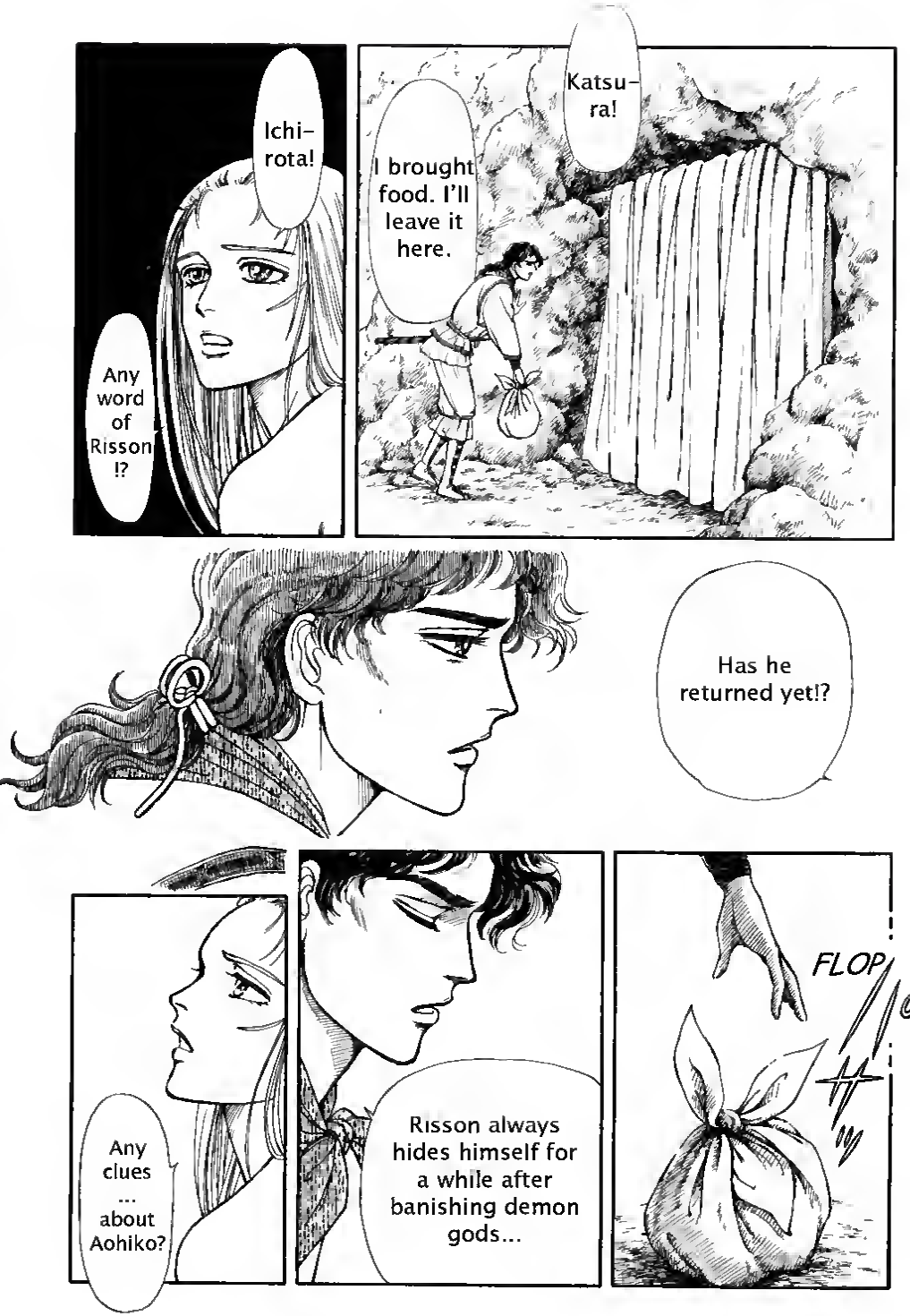

If she's destined to die, she'd already be dead.
Pray for her recovery!

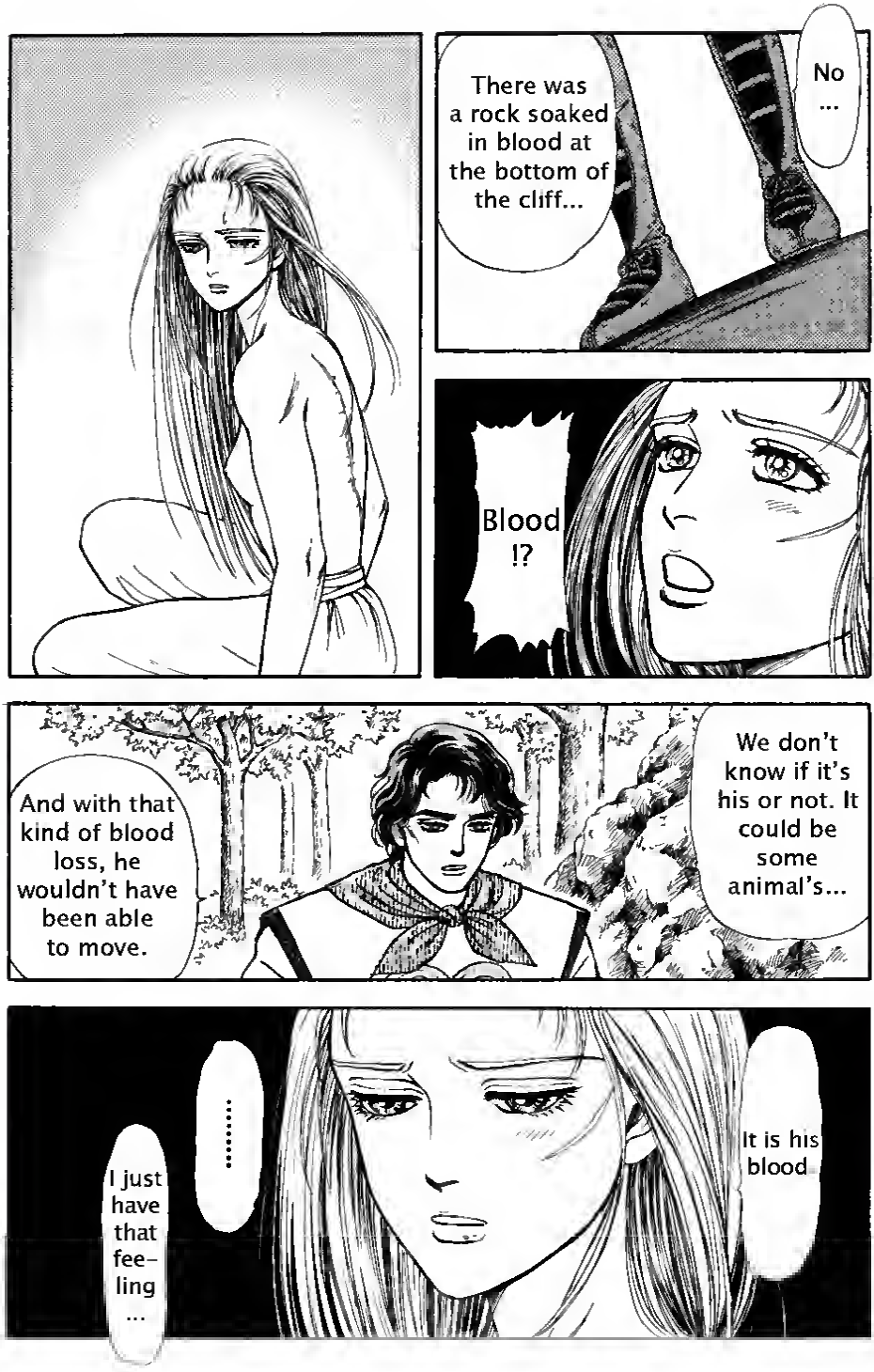
If Toko dies, Takaya will kill me!
If Toko dies ...!


Prayers, wishes, and thoughts are considered sacred by the followers of the gods that cannot be seen.

Someone's...
combing...
her hair...
It's a woman...

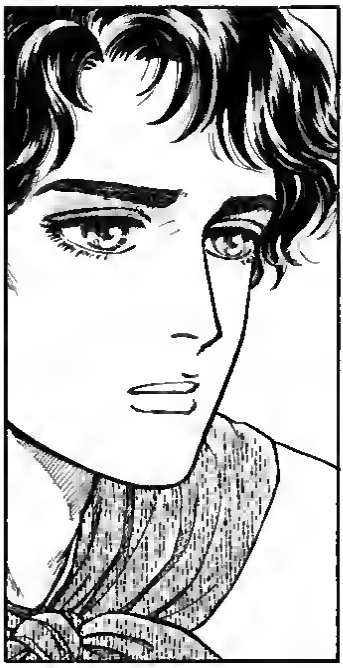

It looks like...
...she's praying for something...
What beautiful eyes.
I wonder what she's looking at.
Is this a dream...?
It must be...

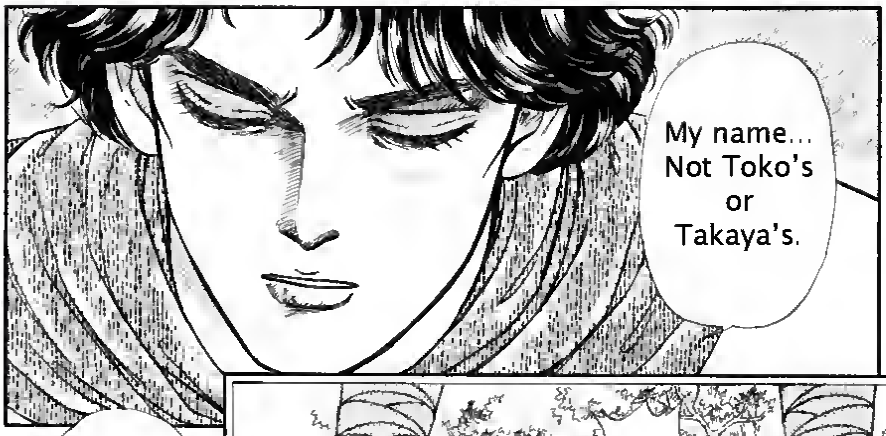

Ichi-rota!
Any word of Risson !?
Katsu-ra!
I brought food. I'll leave it here.
Has he returned yet!?
Any clues ... about Aohiko?
Risson always hides himself for a while after banishing demon gods...
FLOP


No ...
There was a rock soaked in blood at the bottom of the cliff...
Blood !?
We don't know if it's his or not. It could be some animal's...
And with that kind of blood loss, he wouldn't have been able to move.
It is his blood
.....
I just have that fee-ling ...

...found us... you called my name...

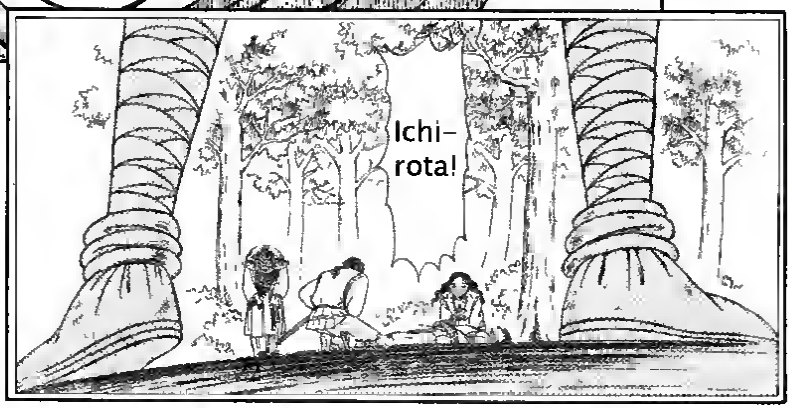
When you ...





My name... Not Toko's or Takaya's.

You were worried about me, weren't you?

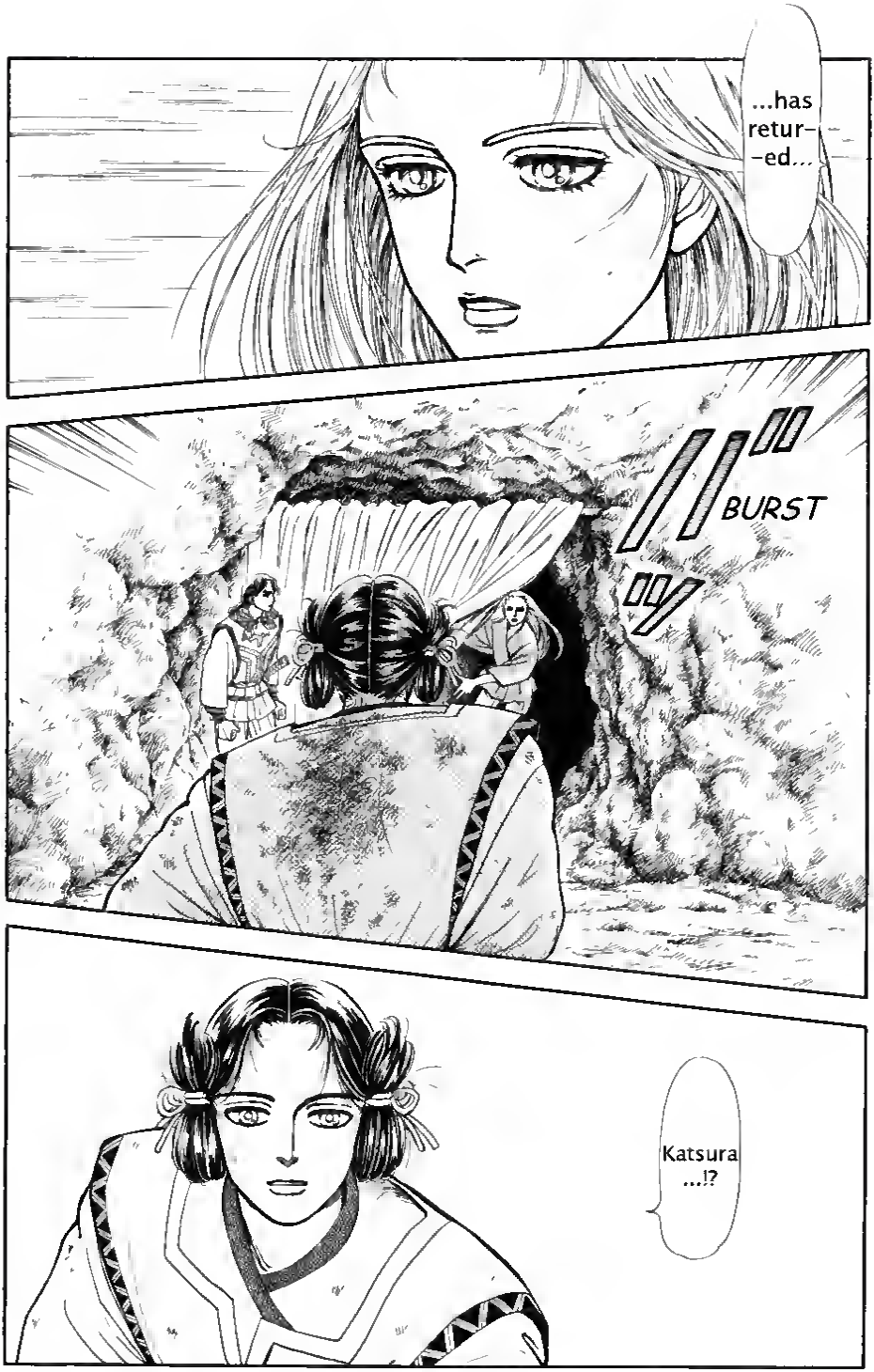


Ichi-rota!

Yes ...
I'm the one who gave you your name.
You were ... worried about me, weren't you?
Why are you ... bringing this up?
So it was your "responsibility"!?
What responsibility do you have to worry about Aohiko!?

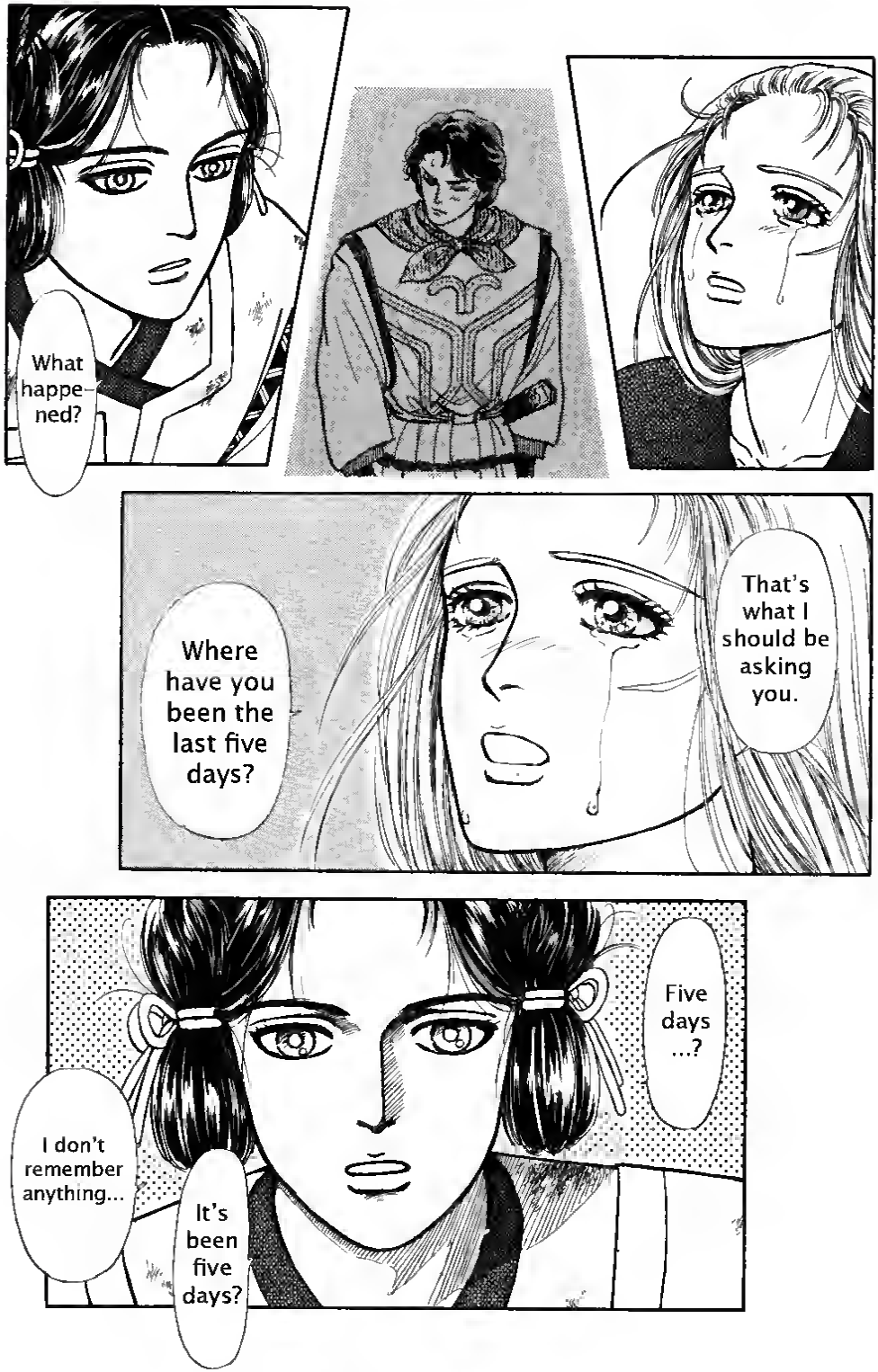
BLUSH
FWIP
All three of them ...
I said I would protect them.
GASP

But I wasn't able to ...
... regre- ttably ...
Is that all?
Is that all there is to it, Katsura...?
Aohiko ...
What else could it be!?
Give it a rest!

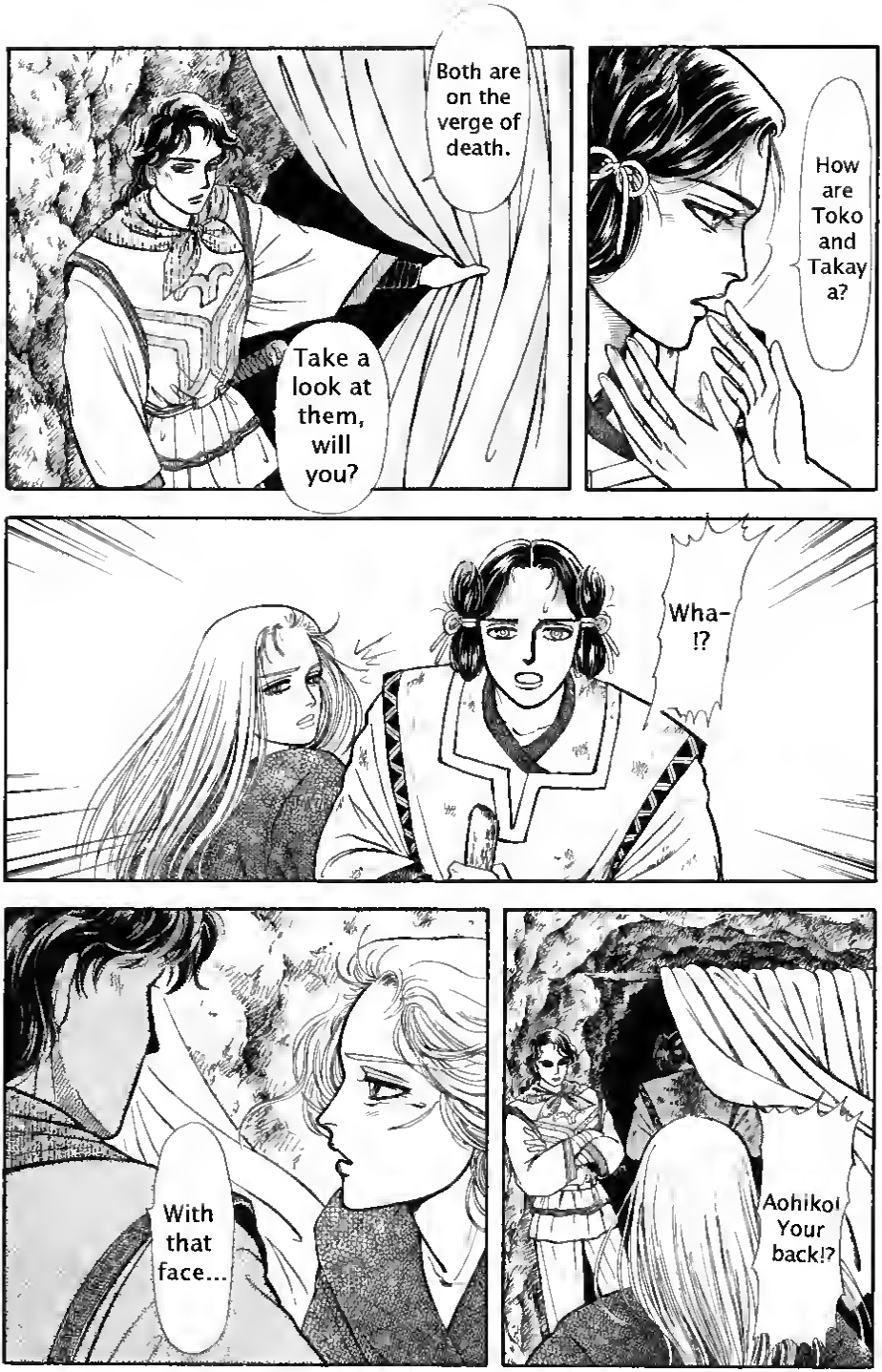

...has retur-
-ed...
BURST
Katsura ...!?

Ah
...
Aohi-
ko!

Katsu
-ra?
Oh...
What
is it?

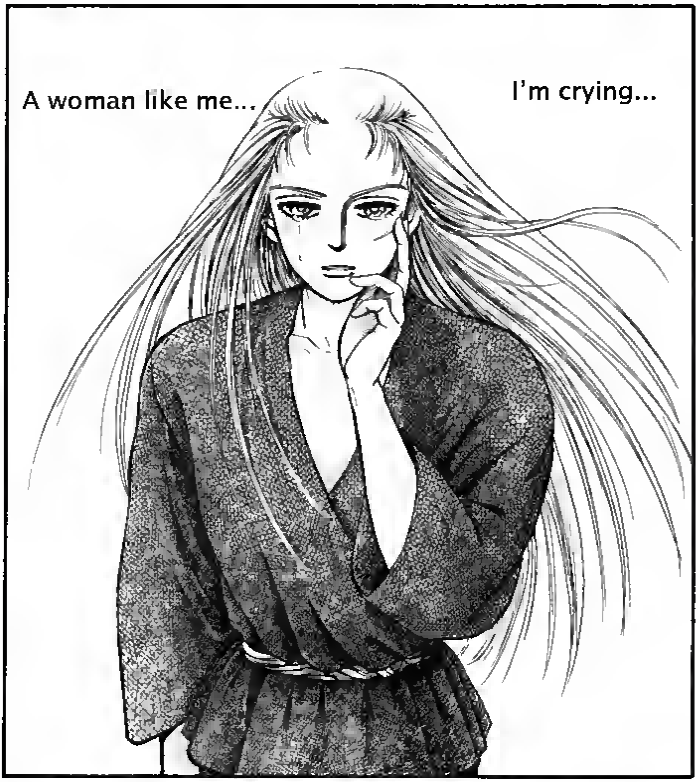

What happened?
Where have you been the last five days?
That's what I should be asking you.
It's been five days?
I don't remember anything...
Five days ...?

I'm so glad ...
... after I fell ...
...off the... cliff.
So glad ...
So glad ...
Katsura...


Both are on the verge of death.
Take a look at them, will you?
How are Toko and Takaya?
Wha-!?
With that face...
Aohiko! Your back!?

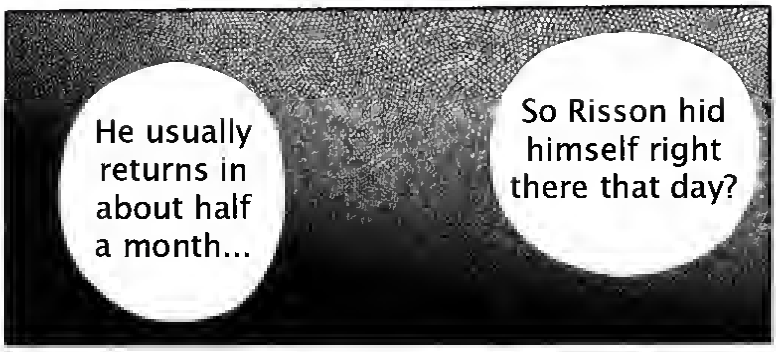
SMACK
No woman looks worse in tears than you.
...what good is crying going to do?
Don't ever cry again!
I'm crying...
DASH

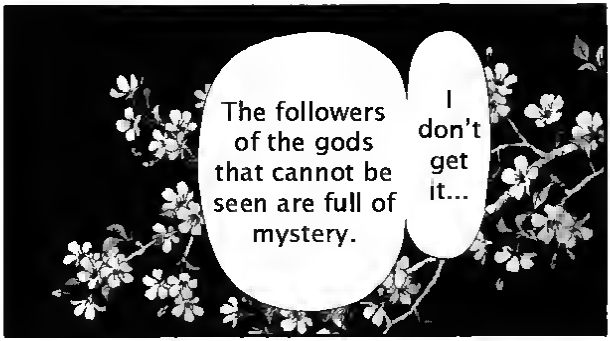
I swore...


A woman like me...
I'm crying...

I swore on this scar
to never cry...

Signs of a deep wound on Aohiko's back?
Yes!
When I was helping him change and cleaning clotted blood off his back...
I found a half-healed wound.
I was surprised he didn't remember it.
And he says he doesn't have any memory of the last five days?
That's what he said!
But!
Risson's power doesn't work on human affliction...
I wonder if Risson healed him...



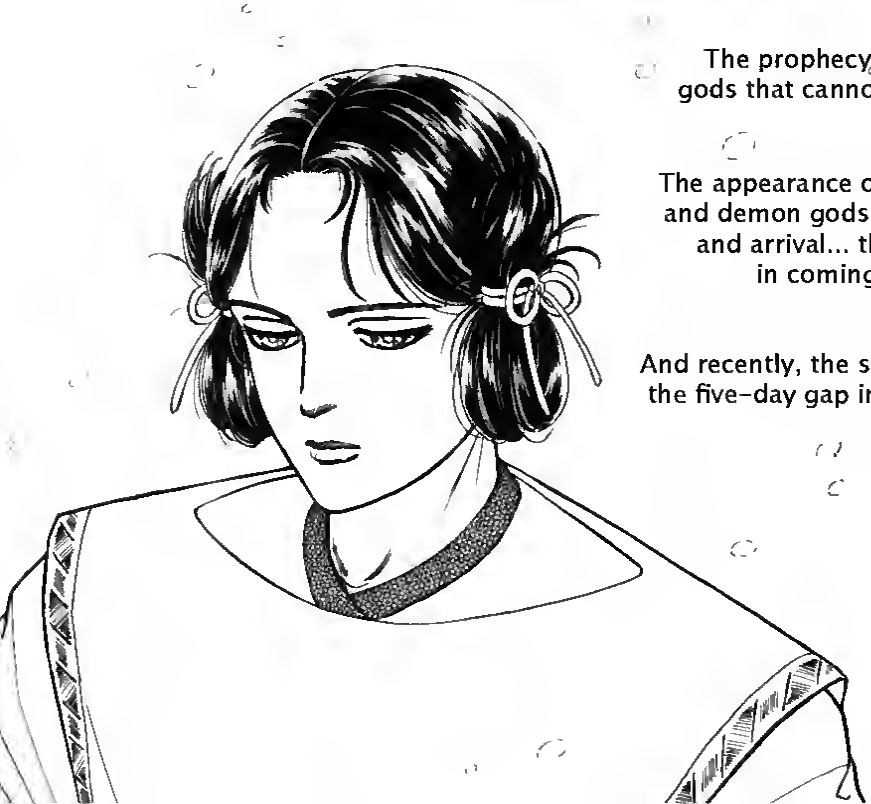


There are too many things I don't understand...

The prophecy from the gods that cannot be seen...

The appearance of the demigods and demon gods... their conflict and arrival... their purpose in coming here...

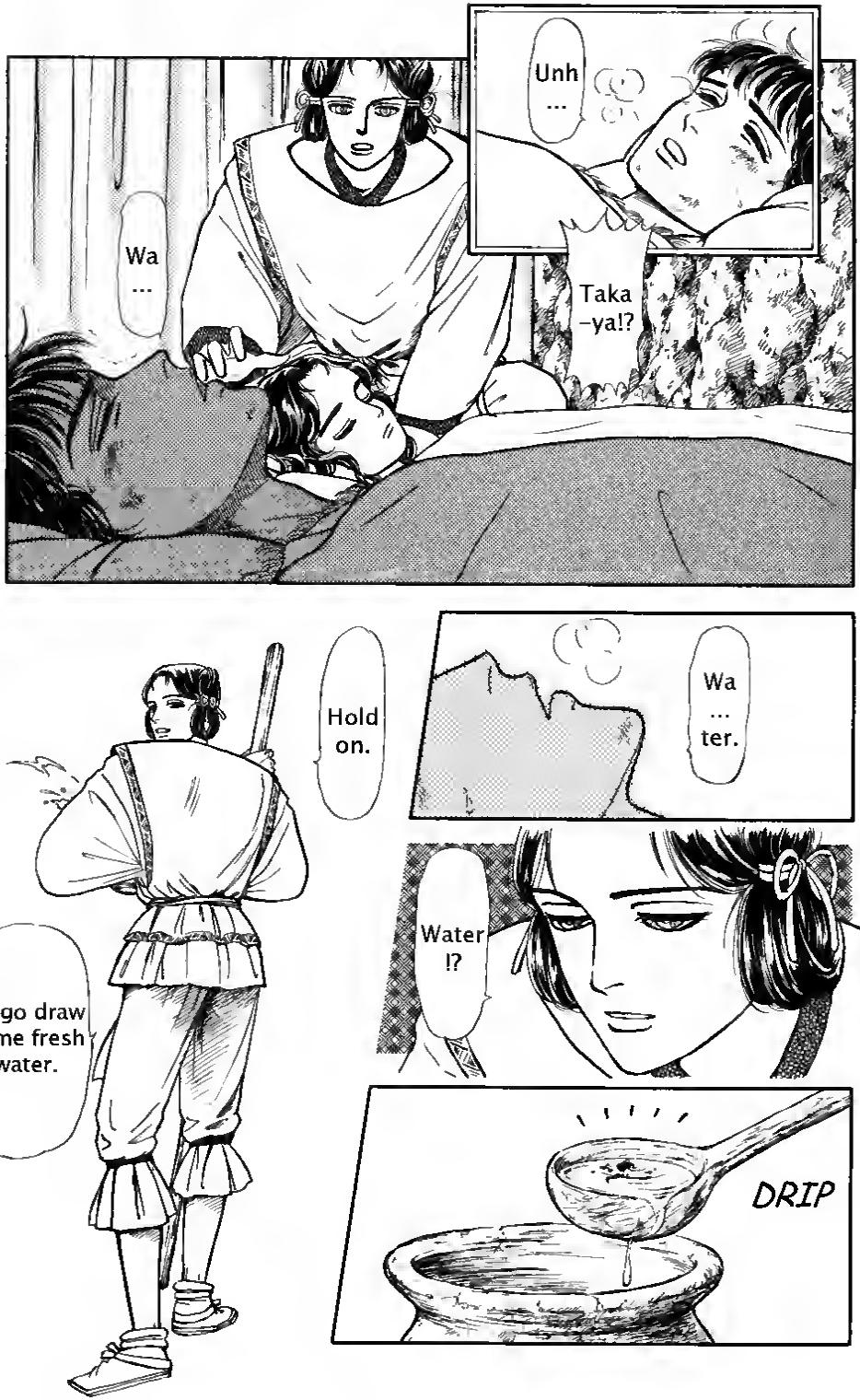
And recently, the scar on my back, the five-day gap in my memory...

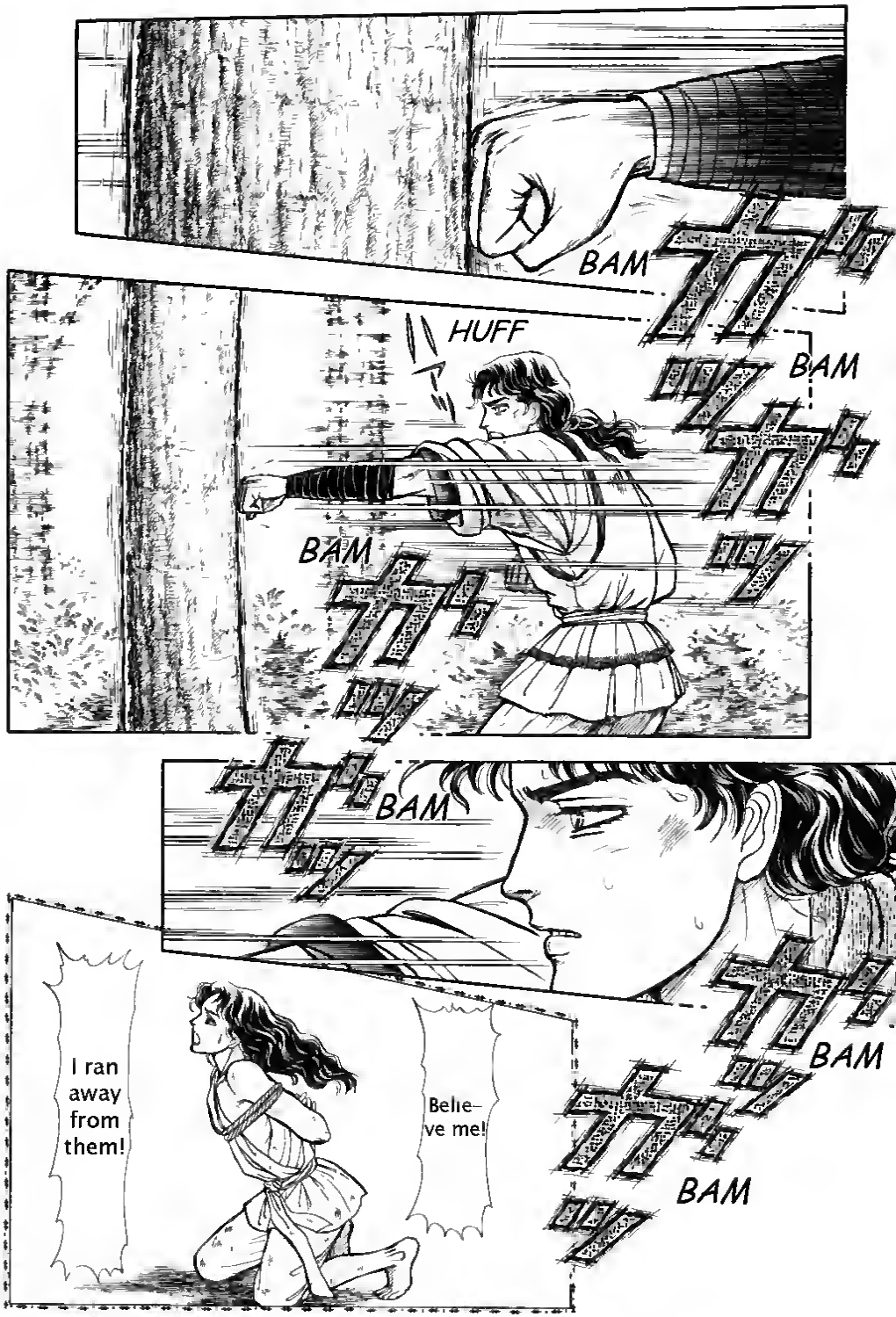


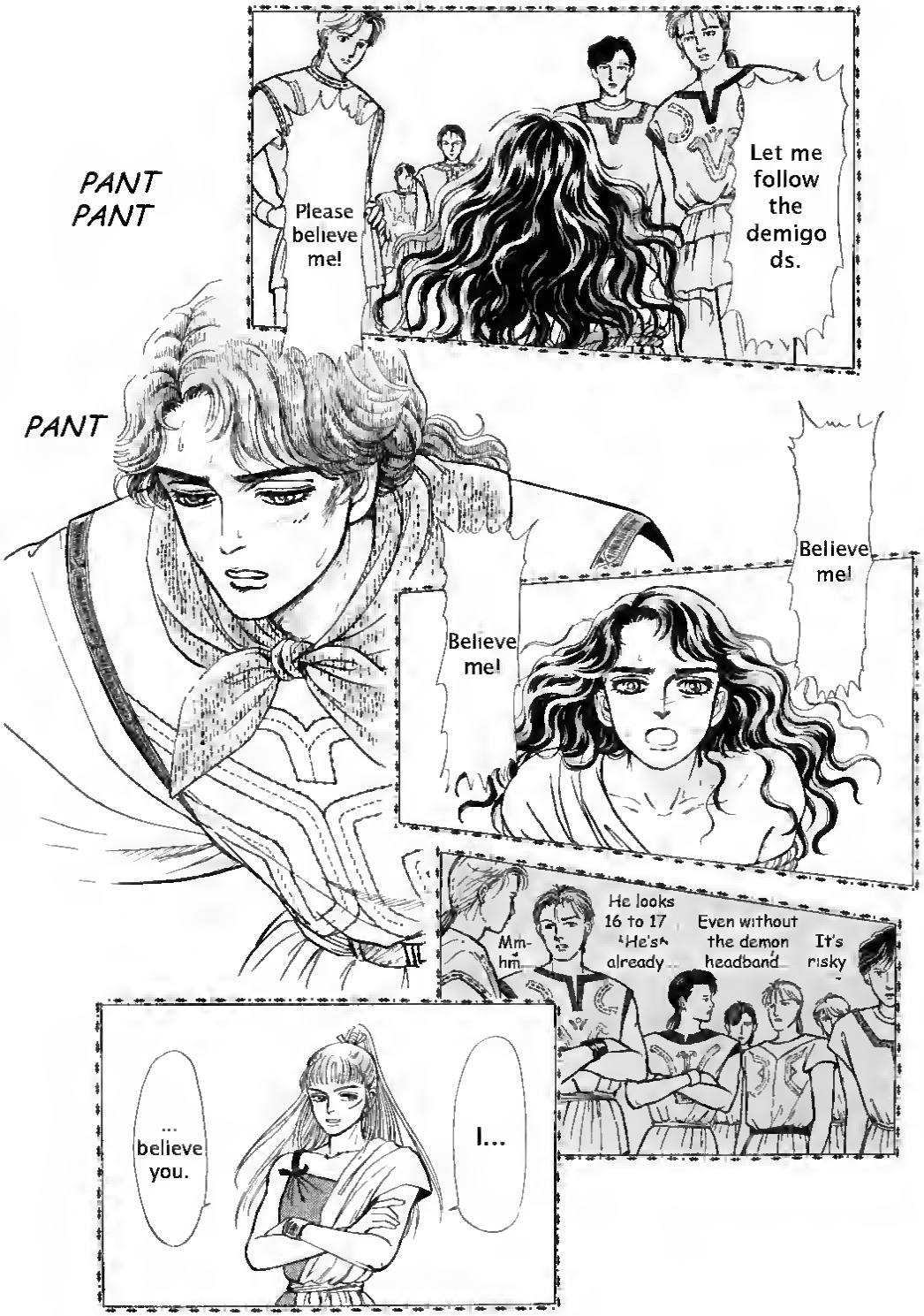
She must have devoted all of her life force to keeping Takaya alive...

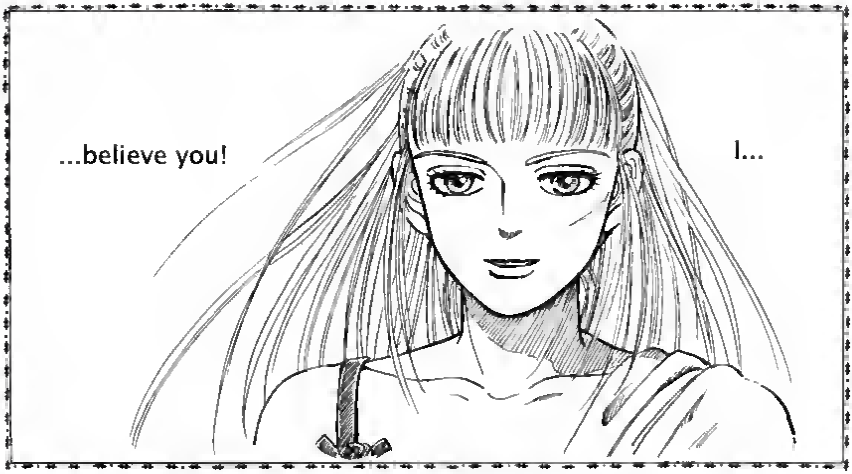
She should have died by now...

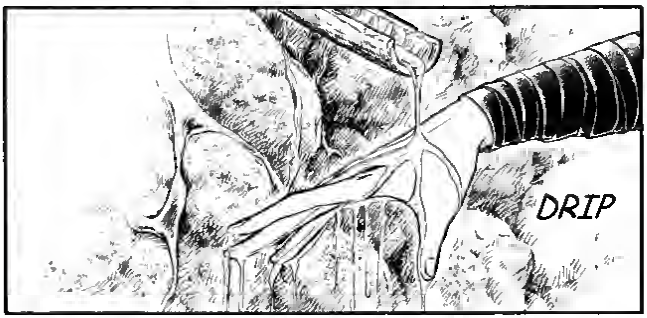
What is keeping her alive like this...?
I heard he was so weak he couldn't even gasp for air...
There's a limit to what even mantras can do...
And then... Takaya...
His recovery is extraordinary...


Unh
...
Wa
...
Taka
-ya!?
Hold
on.
Wa
...
ter.
Water
!?
I'll go draw
some fresh
water.
DRIP


BAM
HUFF
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
I ran away from them!
Belie-ve me!


PANT
PANT
Please believe me!
Let me follow the demigods.
PANT
Believe me!
Believe me!
Mm-hm
He looks 16 to 17
He's already...
Even without the demon headband
It's risky
...believe you.
I...





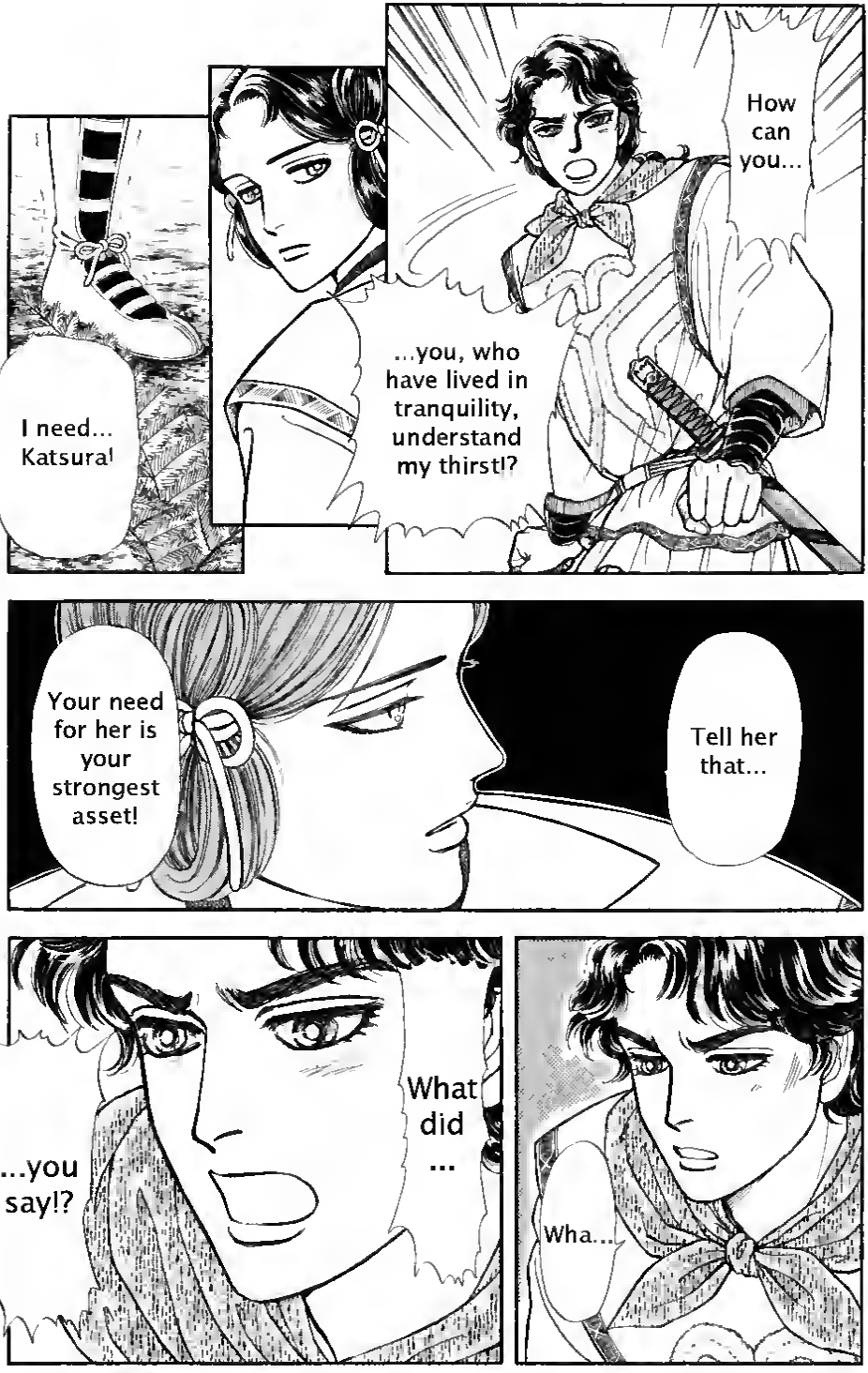
TRICKLE

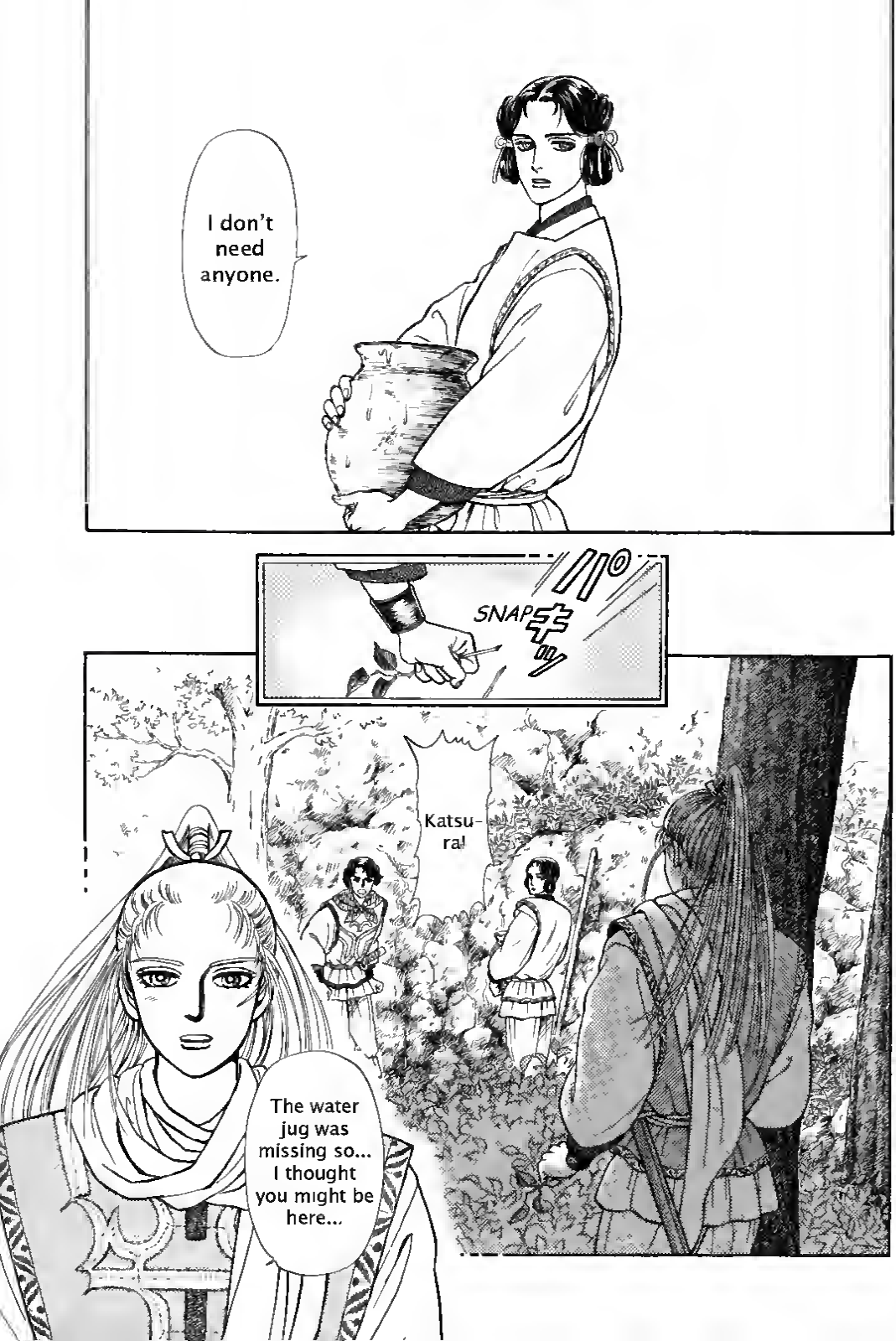
I came for water ...
You don't need my permis-sion.
The water doesn't belong to anyone.
Right?

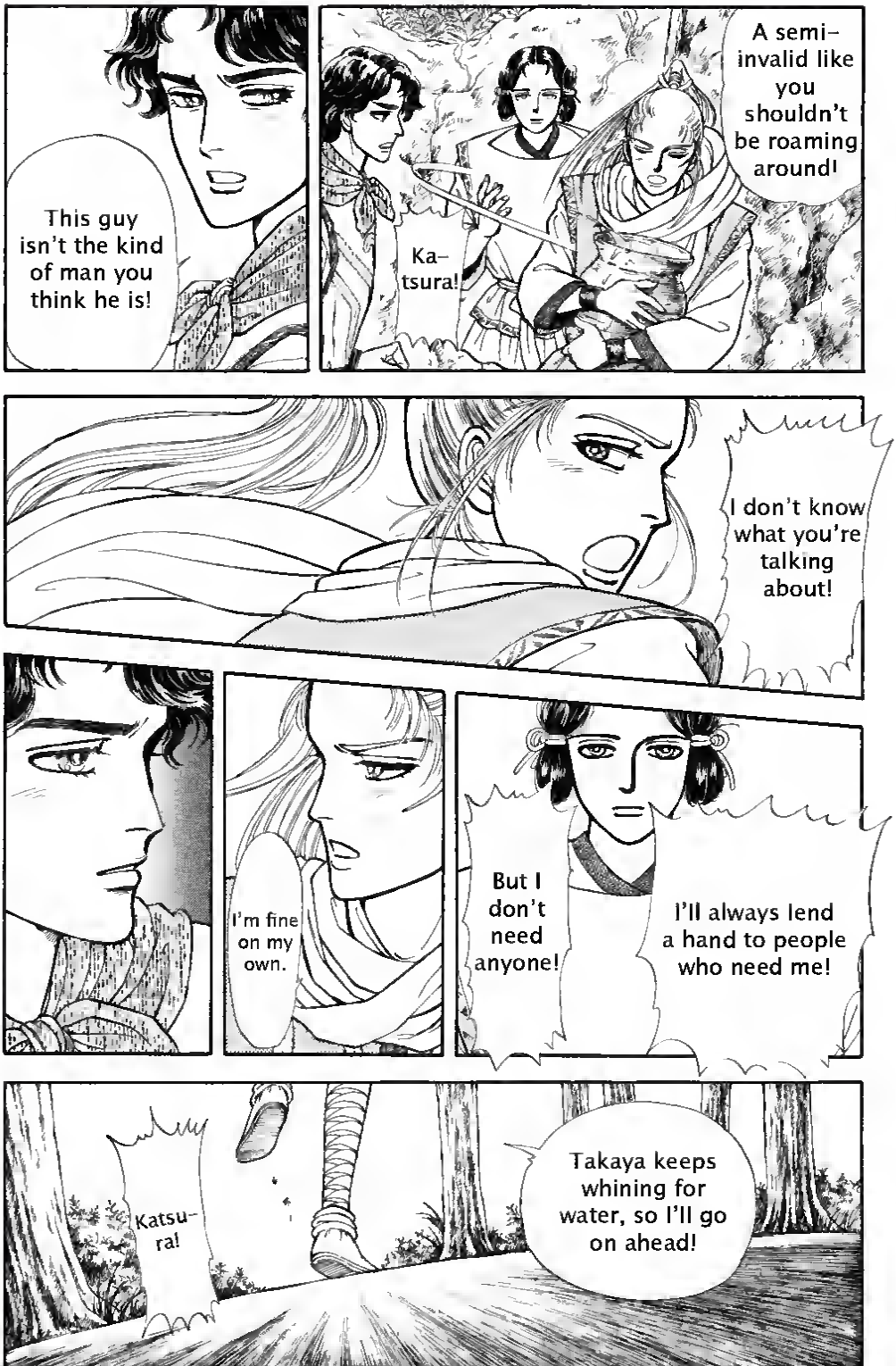
...what would you do?
If I said no...
But ...
TRICKLE
SPLASH
TRICKLE
Leave and go to another watering place?
I'm not losing ...
You're a sorry excuse for a man.

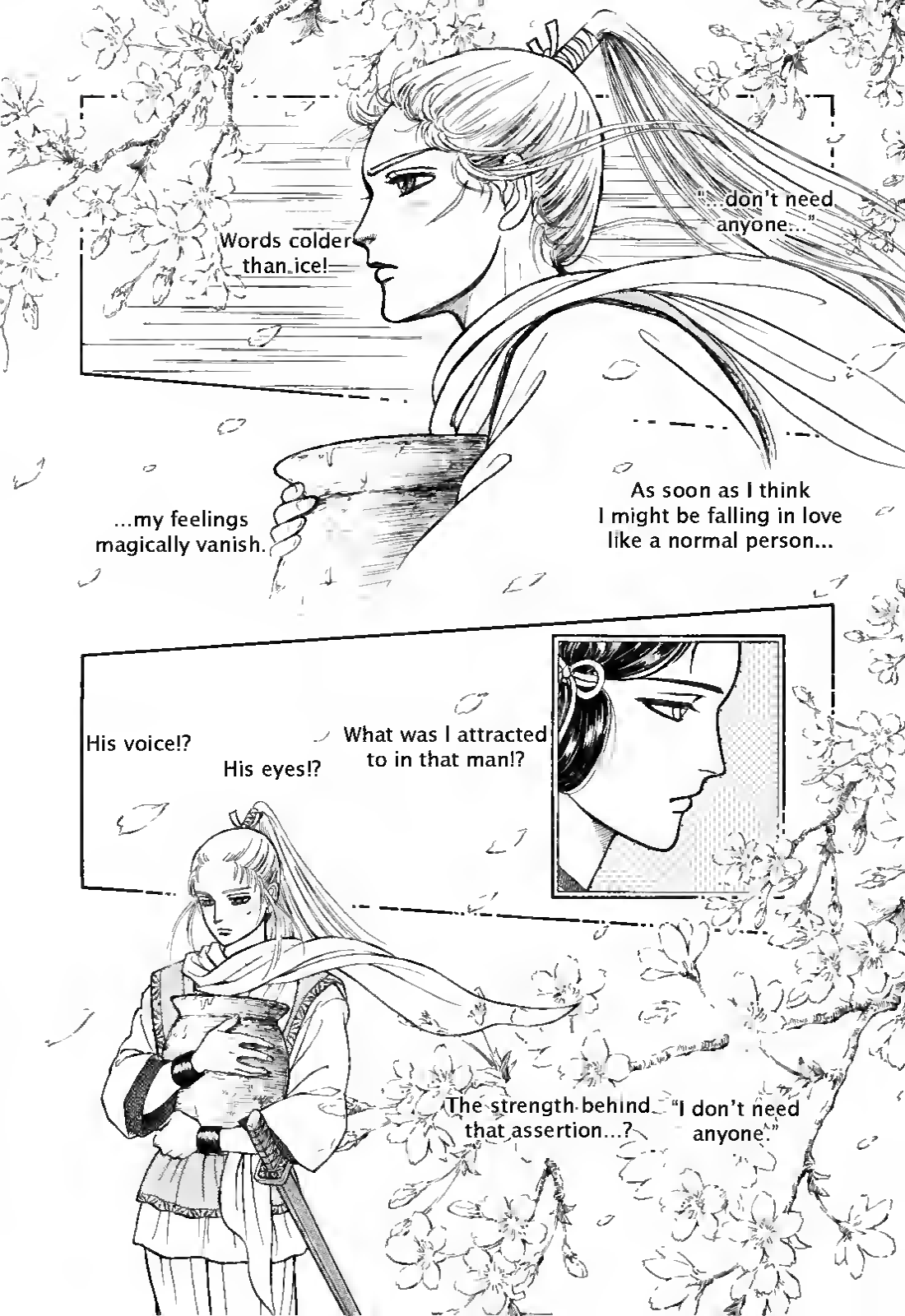
I'm not losing Katsura to a man like you!
I'm the one who's protected her!
We've been through thick and thin together for over three years.
They say they've been saved by you countless times.
Everyone tells me about your work.

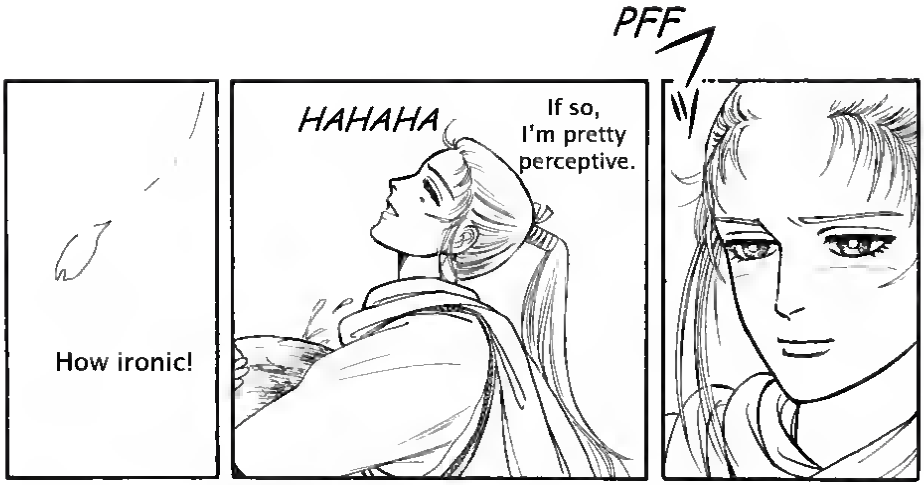
...deep down, everyone fears and distrusts me!
...or how many followers of the demon gods I kill...
No matter how many lives I save...
If it wasn't for her, I'd...
Except for Katsura! She's the only one who believes in me completely!
Only good people waver.
The evil don't hesitate like that.
...I'd proba-bly...


How can you...
...you, who have lived in tranquility, understand my thirst!?
I need... Katsura!
Your need for her is your strongest asset!
Tell her that...
What did ...
...you say!?
Wha...

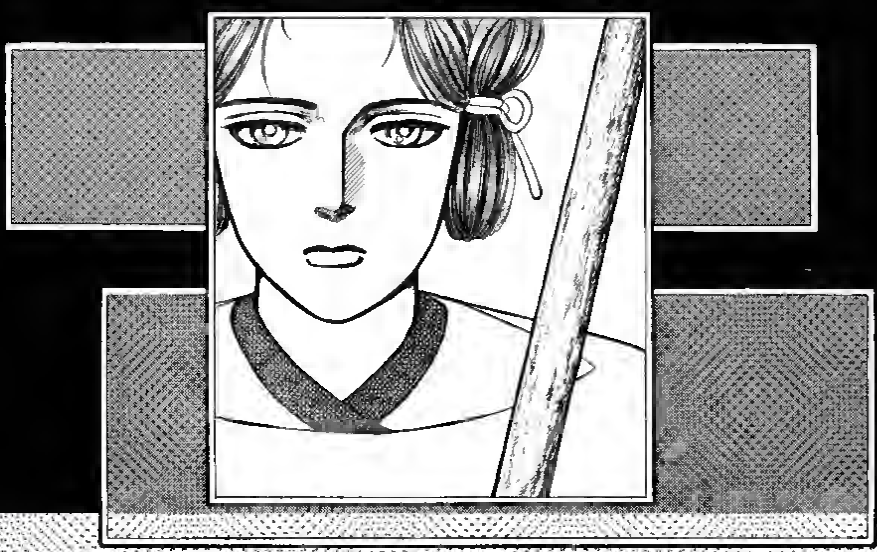

I don't need anyone.
SNAP
Katsu-ra!
The water jug was missing so... I thought you might be here...


This guy isn't the kind of man you think he is!
Ka-tsura!
A semi-invalid like you shouldn't be roaming around!
I don't know what you're talking about!
I'm fine on my own.
But I don't need anyone!
I'll always lend a hand to people who need me!
Katsu-ra!
Takaya keeps whining for water, so I'll go on ahead!


Words colder than ice!
"...don't need anyone..."
...my feelings magically vanish.
As soon as I think I might be falling in love like a normal person...
His voice!?
His eyes!?
What was I attracted to in that man!?
The strength behind that assertion...?
"I don't need anyone."


How ironic!
HAHAHA
If so, I'm pretty perceptive.
PFF

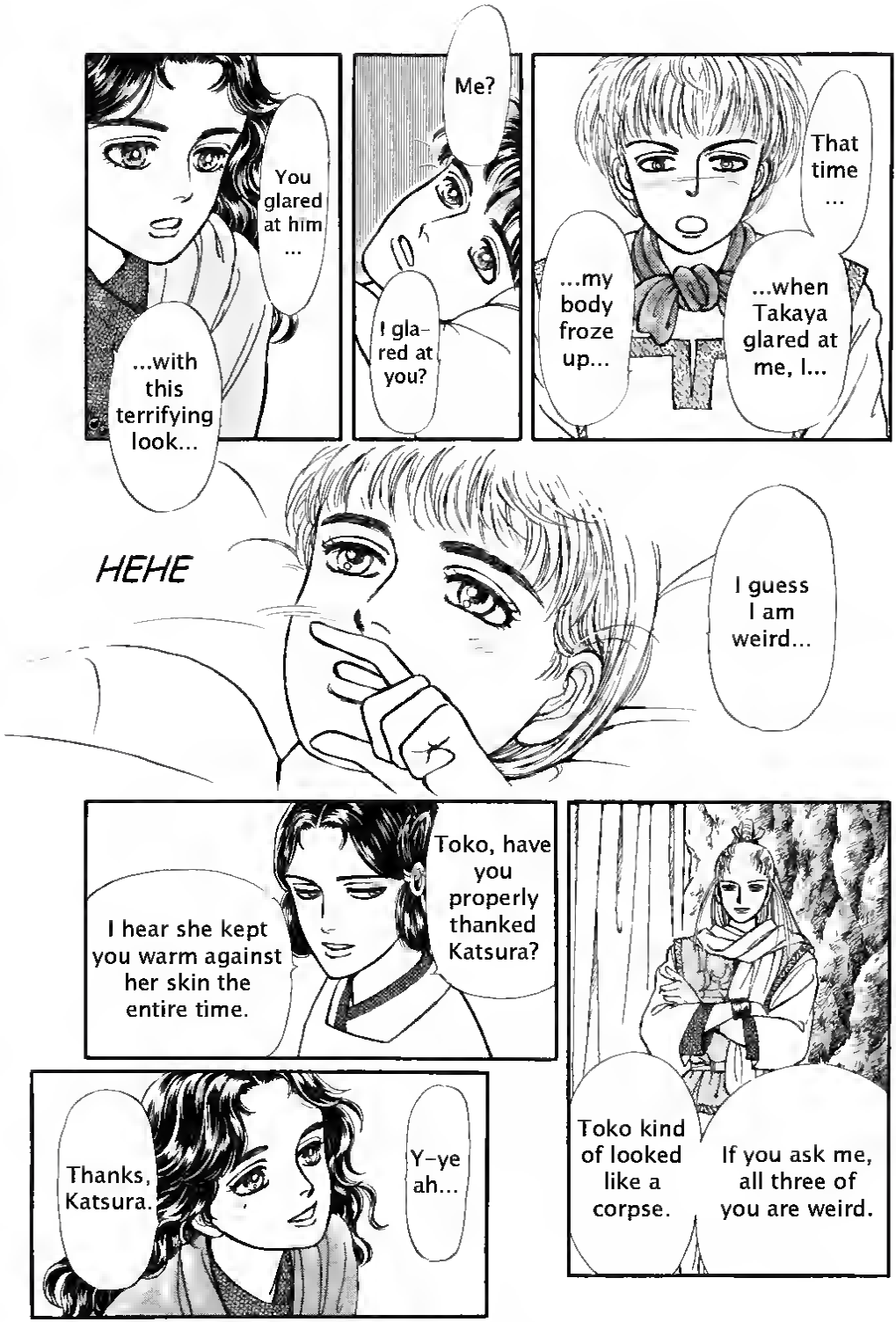
...will never forget.
Those words! Even if others forget them, my sword...

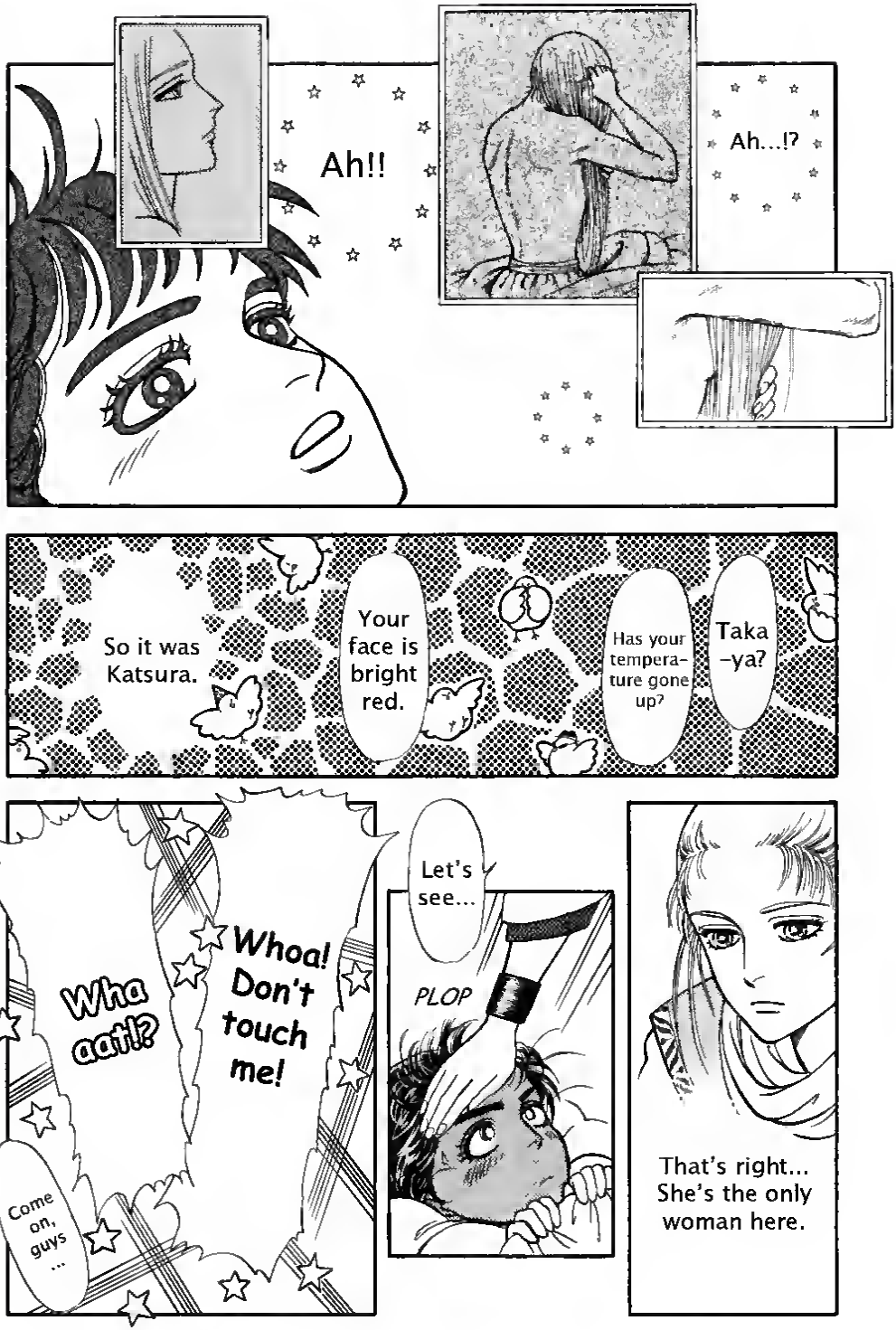


I hear that Takaya and now Toko have opened their eyes.
Yes. The tonic Aohiko prepared seems to have worked...
Good... There's nothing as bad as losing a child.
...
That's your weakness, Chief. You're too nice.

POW
OW WW
What I went through was WAY more painful!
Shut up!
Sorry! Sorry! Sorry!
I don't really understand it, but I guess I was in the wrong too, so I'll let you off this time...
That's one of Takaya's strong points... forgiving people even when he doesn't understand.
It's inevitable.
...but I feel kind of bad for Ino and Toji...
I don't understand it either...

He's just indif-ferent.
He's not cold.
The way that phrase easily rolls off his tongue is so... cold, just like Aohiko...
Aohiko stayed there and let me run away!
That's not true!
Don't say that... I didn't do anything.
His sturdiness is his only redeeming feature.
What do you mean 'only' !?
Takaya! You're kind of strange. Despite being injured so badly...
I was sure you were a goner ...
But you managed to survive.

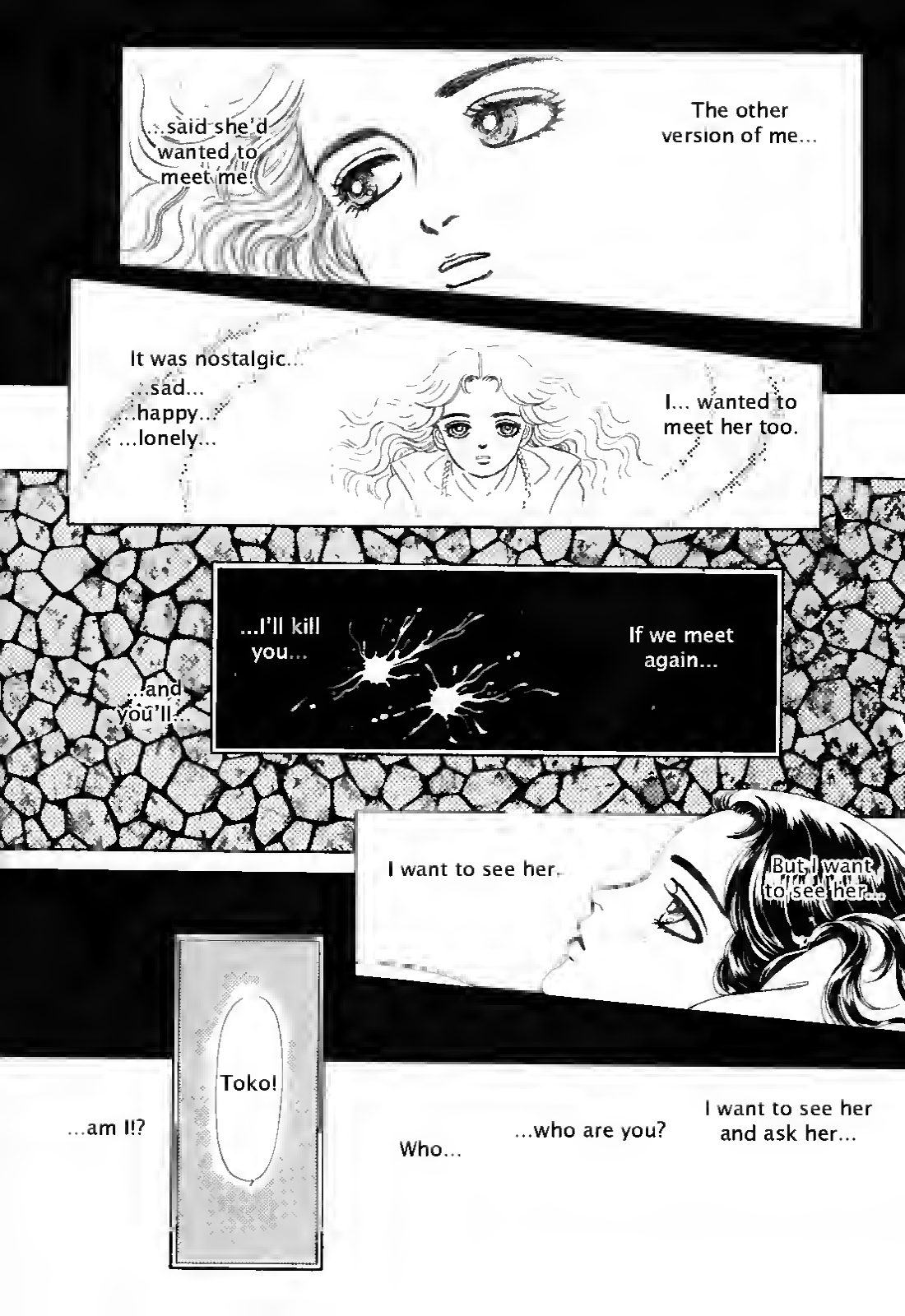

You glared at him ...
...with this terrifying look...
Me?
I gla-red at you?
That time ...
...my body froze up...
...when Takaya glared at me, I...
HEHE
I guess I am weird...
Toko, have you properly thanked Katsura?
I hear she kept you warm against her skin the entire time.
Thanks, Katsura.
Y-ye ah...
Toko kind of looked like a corpse.
If you ask me, all three of you are weird.


Ah!!
Ah...!?
So it was Katsura.
Your face is bright red.
Has your temperature gone up?
Taka-ya?
Wha aat!?
Whoa! Don't touch me!
Come on, guys ...
Let's see...
PLOP
That's right... She's the only woman here.

So it was Katsura who warmed me up...

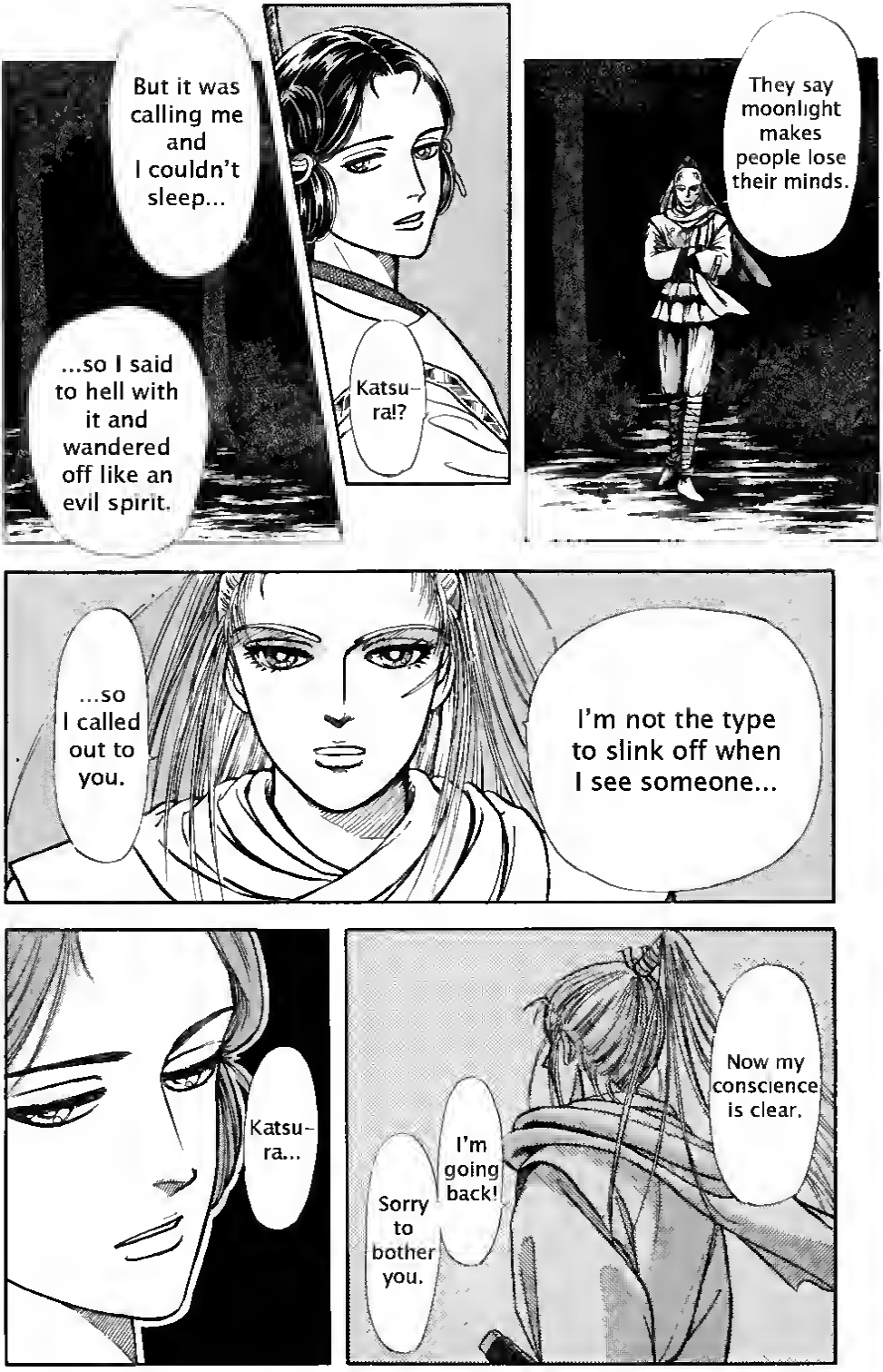
But...

I don't think that was a dream...

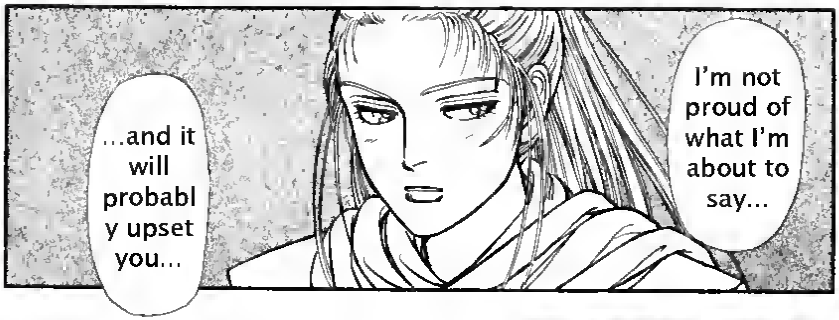

...said she'd wanted to meet me.
The other version of me...
It was nostalgic...
...sad...
...happy...
...lonely...
I... wanted to meet her too.
...I'll kill you...
If we meet again...
...and you'll...
I want to see her.
But, I want to see her...
Toko!
...am I!?
Who...
...who are you?
I want to see her and ask her...

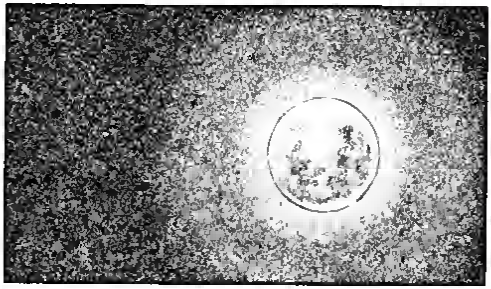
Thank you for saving me...
Idiot!
...we could at least die together ...
I thoug -ht...
I am an idiot...
He went out earlier ...
Aohiko's not here...
Hm!?

The moon's bright tonight, isn't it?
Aohiko likes to spend nights like this alone
How come?
...
Takaya?
... okay ...
He'll be...
What?
What do you mean "okay"?
Taka-ya?


But it was calling me and I couldn't sleep...
...so I said to hell with it and wandered off like an evil spirit.
Katsu-ra!?
They say moonlight makes people lose their minds.
...so I called out to you.
I'm not the type to slink off when I see someone...
Katsu-ra...
Sorry to bother you.
I'm going back!
Now my conscience is clear.

Just stay and listen.

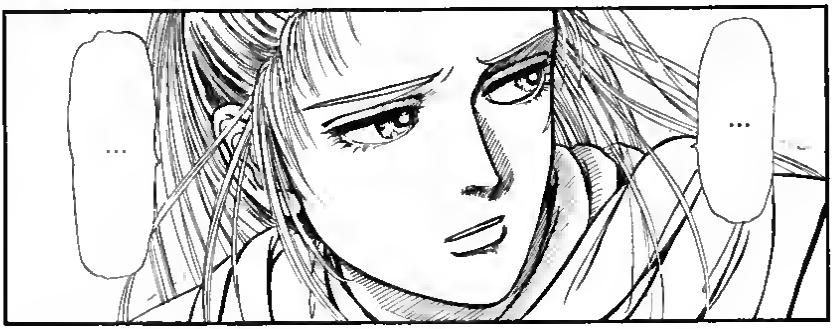

I'm not proud of what I'm about to say...
...and it will probabl y upset you...

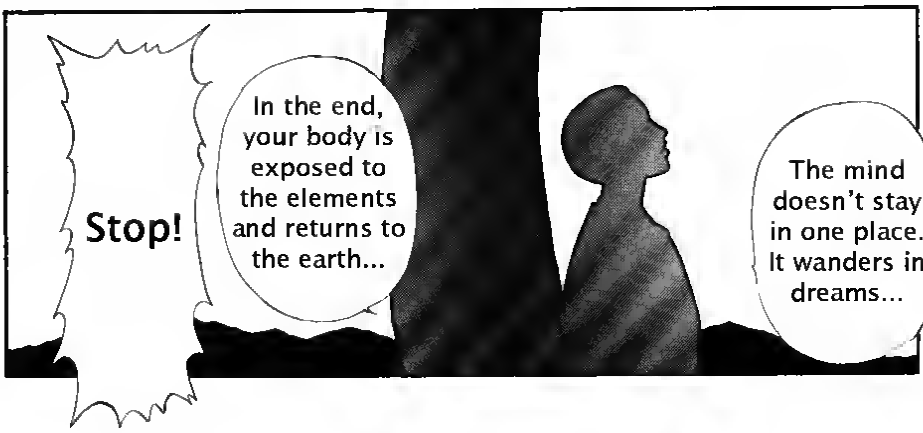


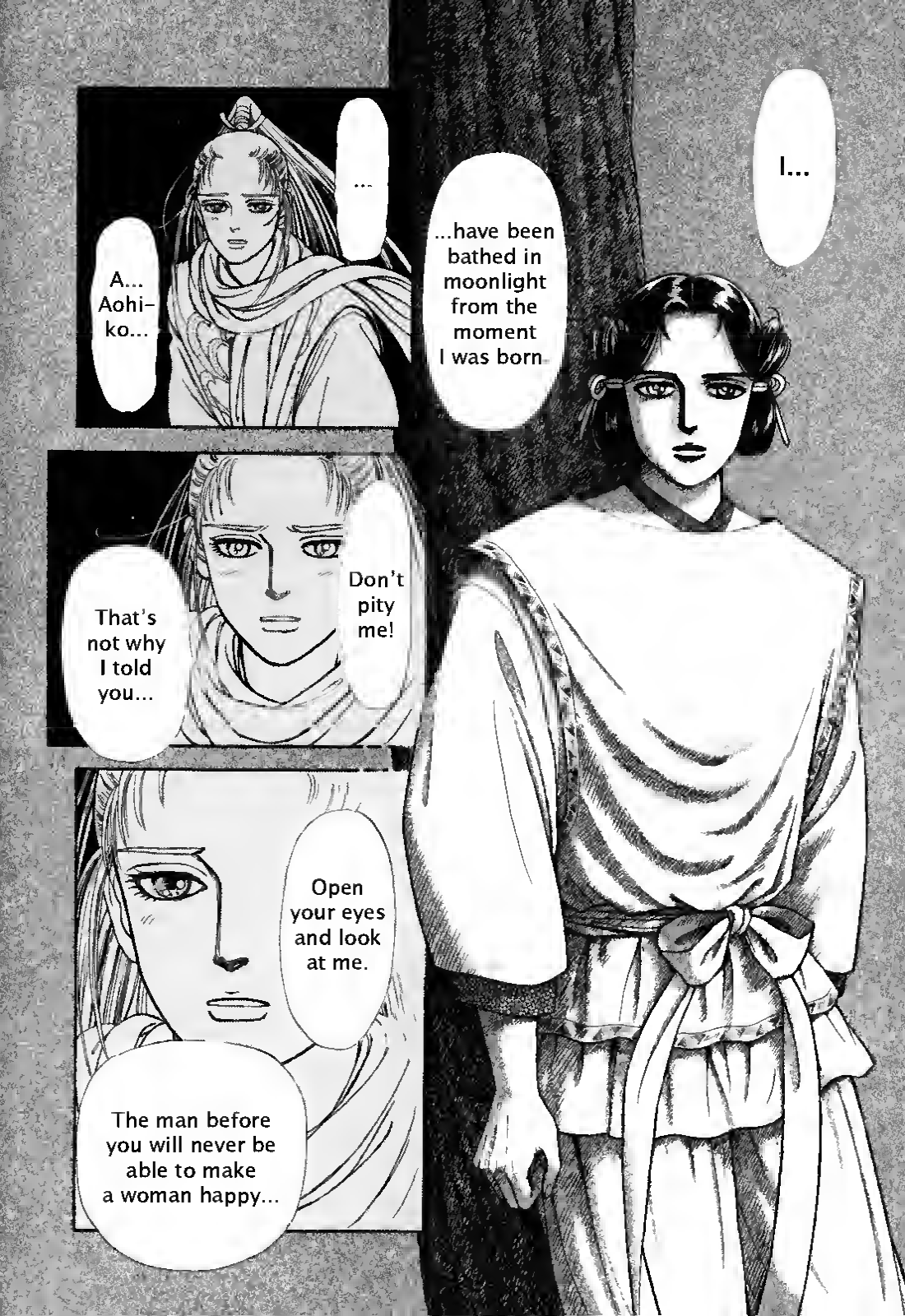
A cruel fate awaits men in my blooline...
I was told growing up that the males never escape this fate.
They said it had been this way for genera- tions...

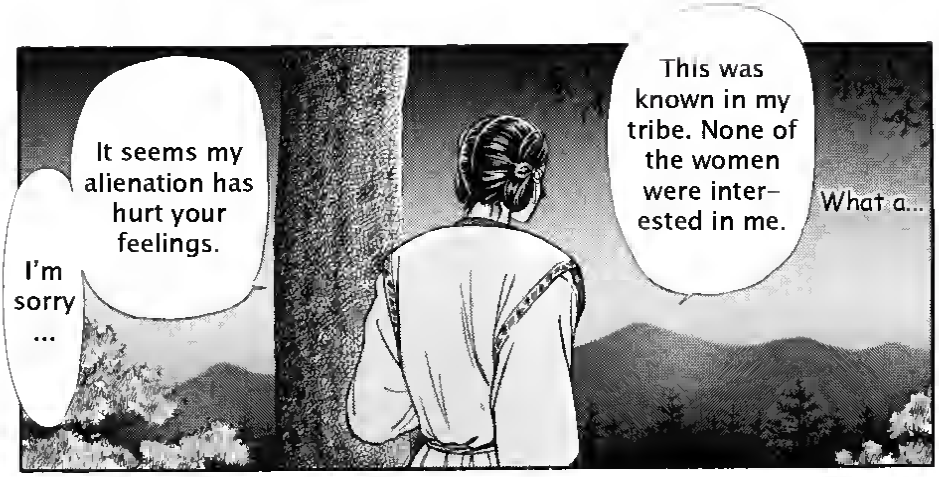
If you become a male oracle and train your mind, it's somewhat different...
...but the men all eventually lose their minds around the time they reach adulthood.
Lose... their minds !?
Completely forget their names, the names of their parents, the names of their friends...
Lose all awareness...

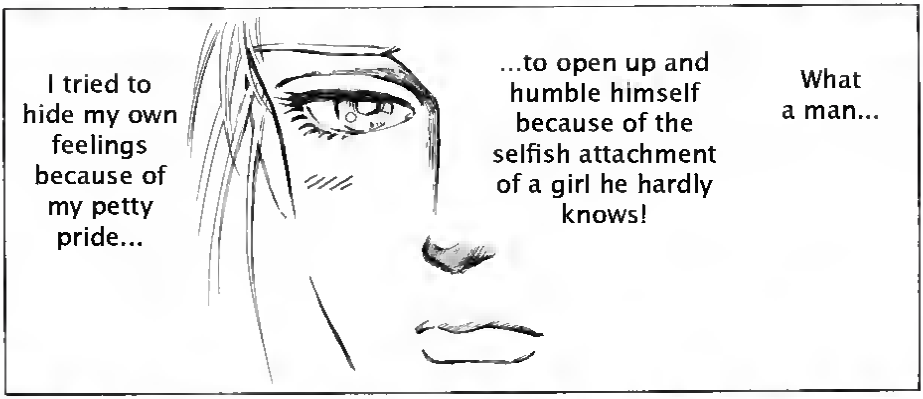
One man becomes like a beast...
...another like a forest spirit, and another like an evil spirit...

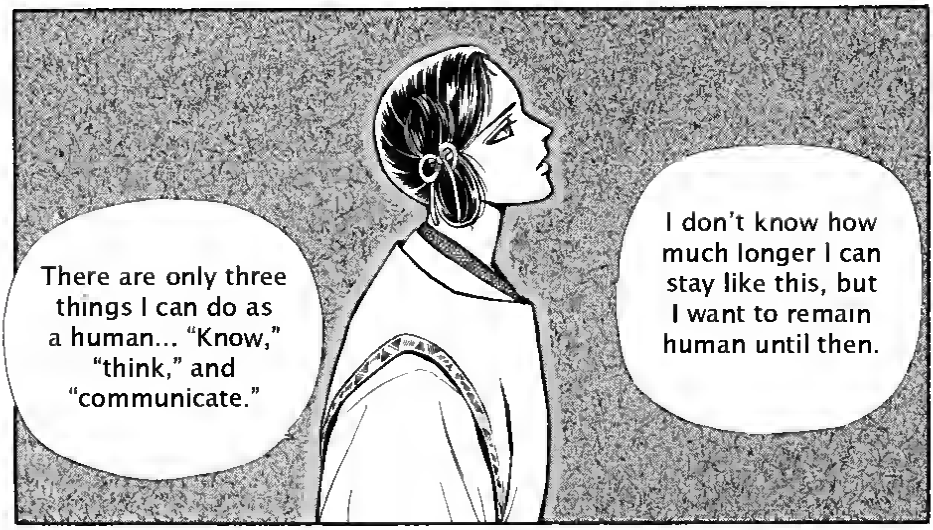

...
...

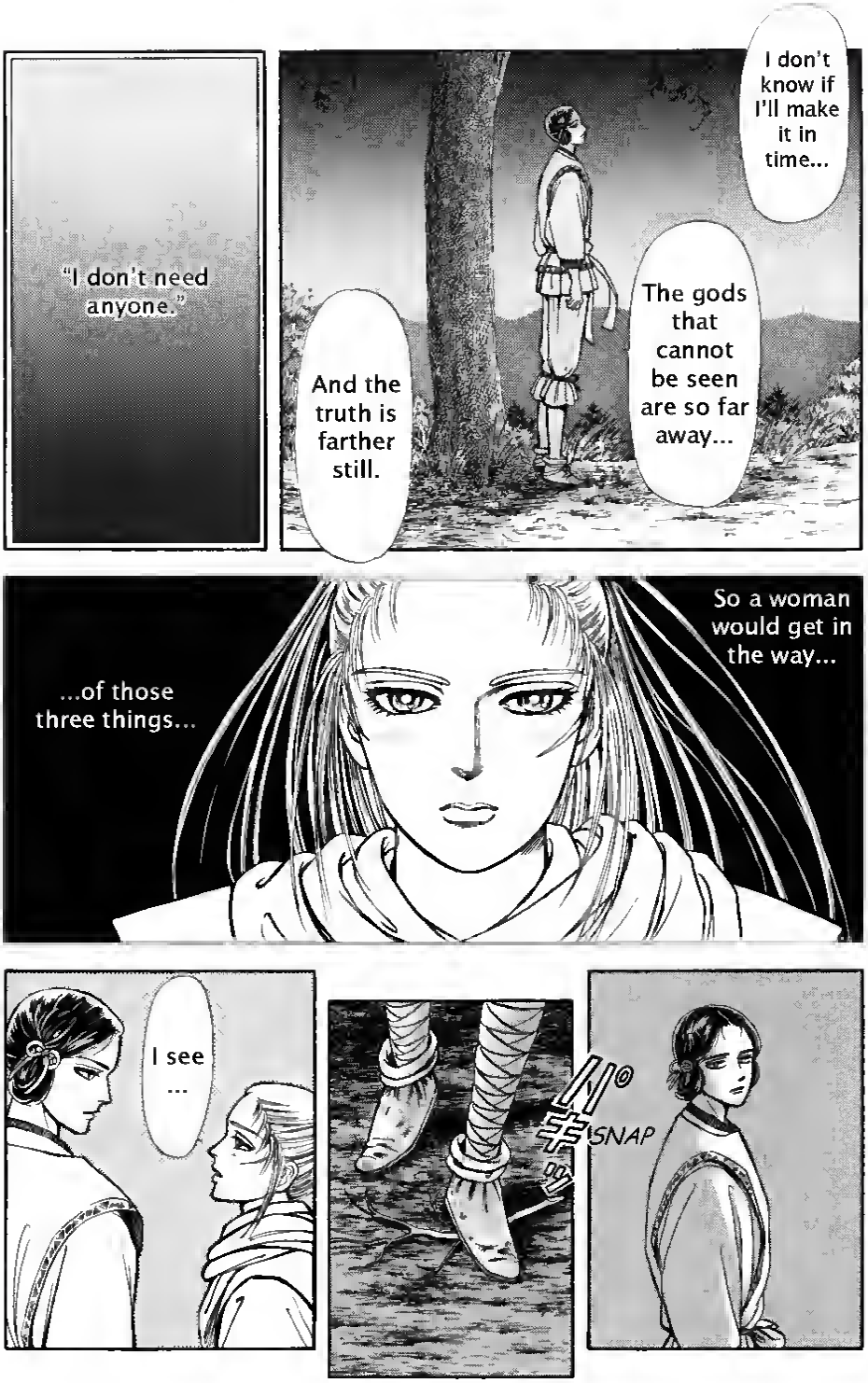

Stop!
In the end, your body is exposed to the elements and returns to the earth...
The mind doesn't stay in one place. It wanders in dreams...

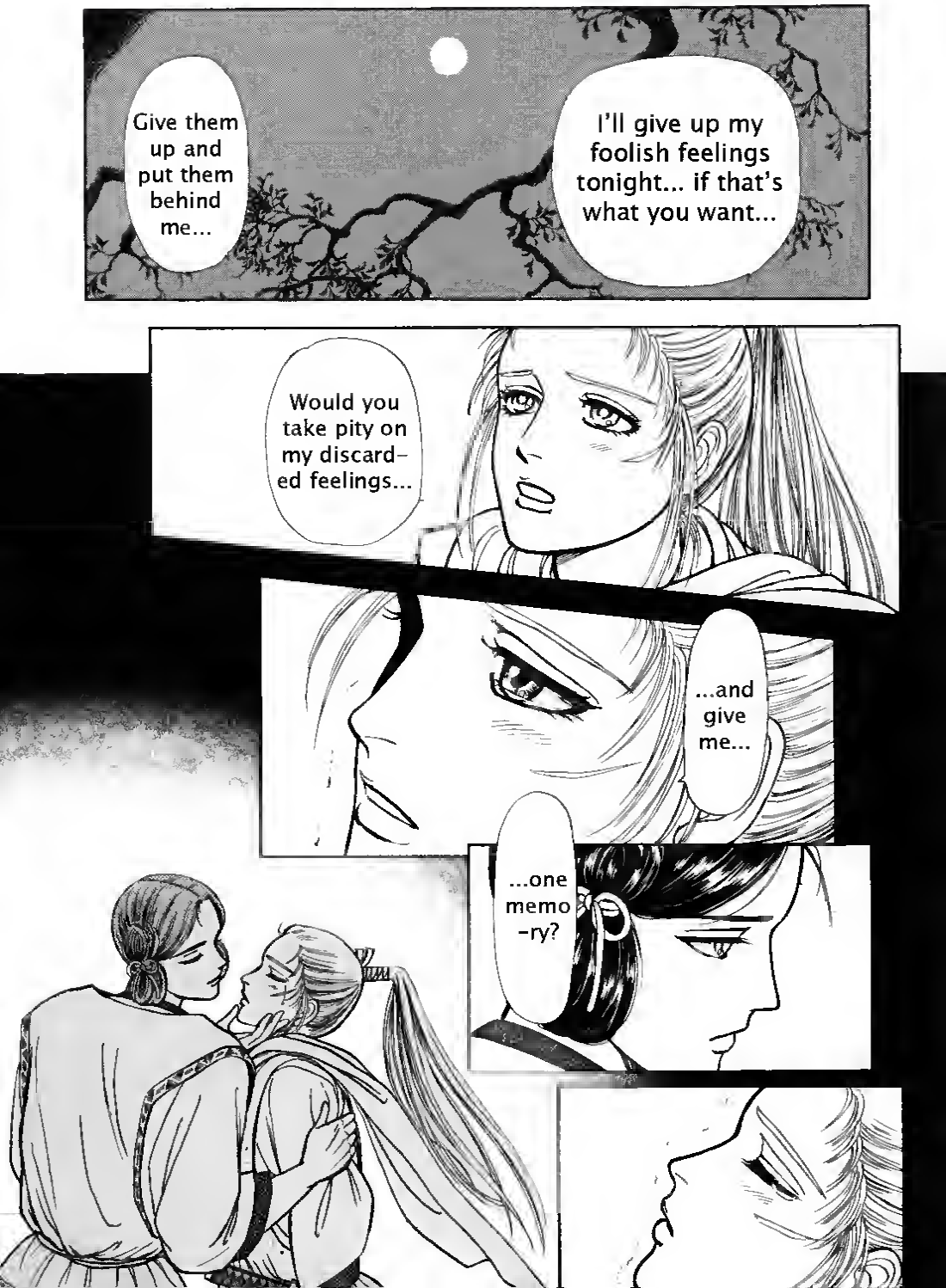

I...
...have been bathed in moonlight from the moment I was born
...
A... Aohi-ko...
Don't pity me!
That's not why I told you...
Open your eyes and look at me.
The man before you will never be able to make a woman happy...


I'm sorry ...
It seems my alienation has hurt your feelings.
This was known in my tribe. None of the women were interested in me.
What a...


I tried to hide my own feelings because of my petty pride...
...to open up and humble himself because of the selfish attachment of a girl he hardly knows!
What a man...


There are only three things I can do as a human... "Know," "think," and "communicate."
I don't know how much longer I can stay like this, but I want to remain human until then.


"I don't need anyone."
I don't know if I'll make it in time...
The gods that cannot be seen are so far away...
And the truth is farther still.
So a woman would get in the way...
...of those three things...
I see ...
SNAP


Give them up and put them behind me...
I'll give up my foolish feelings tonight... if that's what you want...
Would you take pity on my discard-ed feelings...
...and give me...
...one memo-ry?

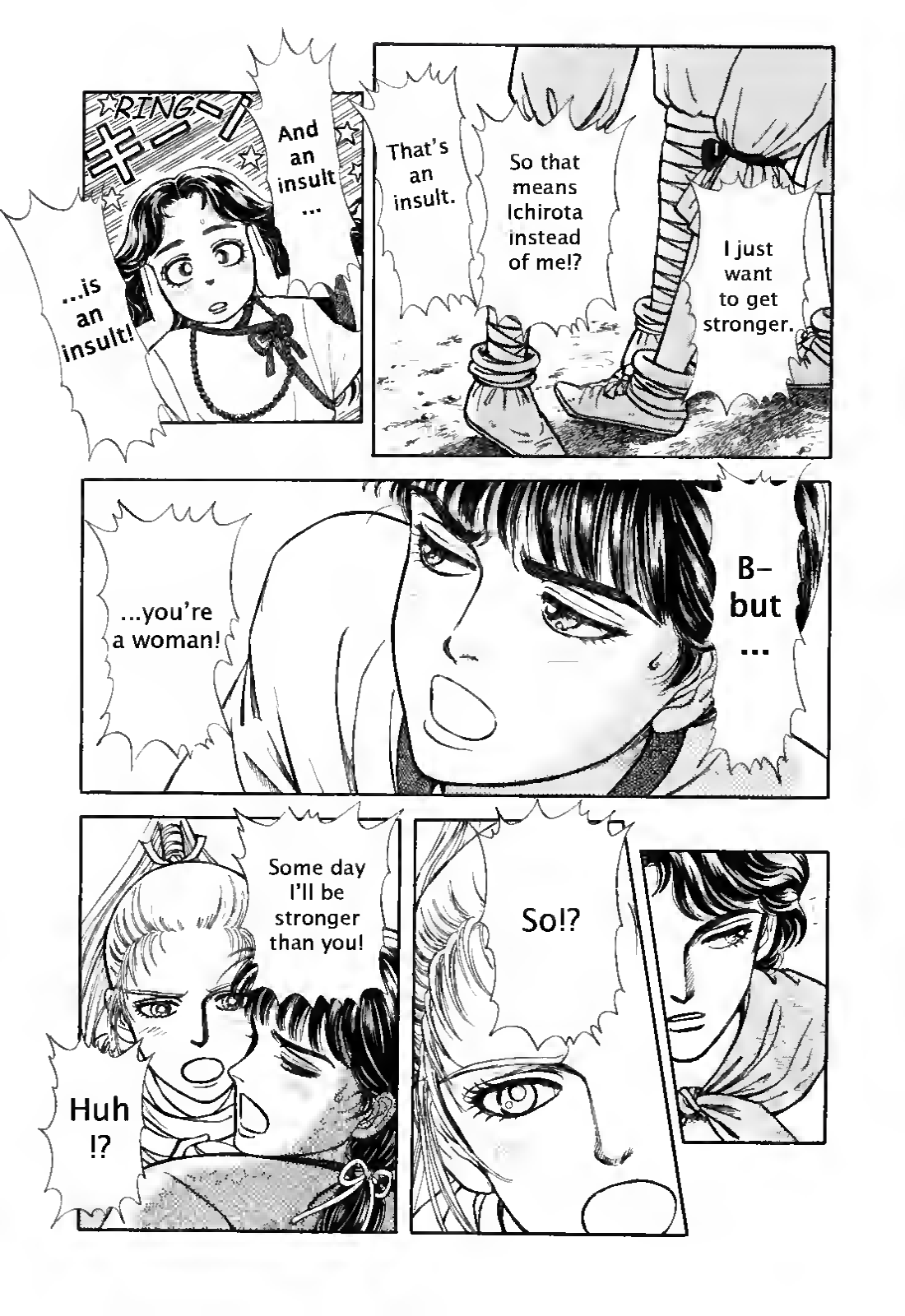
Thank you...
Uh...

...just be allies!
Tomorrow we'll...
I'll never put it behind me!
"I don't need anyone."
No matter what you say...
...or how much you dislike it...
...I'll bury these feelings...
...and protect you as long as I live!

You're not ready yet, Takaya!
I'm all better now!
If I just sleep every day, I'm gonna lose my edge!
DRAGGG
ズルズル
...and it would take several months before you were all healed up!
Don't be ridiculous! Aohiko said nine of your ribs were broken...
They're already set!
If you don't rest, your bones won't set!

Ichi-rota!
I've been look-ing for you!
Ichi-rota!
Oh!
Taka-yaaa!
Ugh! Now he's running...
I... I want to start training under you!
Will you take me on!? I want to get much, much stronger!
And you're the strongest warrior!
Sorry but...
...I'm not so stupid as to take away Katsura's toy.

Katsura! Give Takaya a good scolding!
Whoa! Ka... Katsura!
What kind of stance is that...
I knew I could trust you, Ichirota! Our long time together has made you very sensible.
Toy?
Oh...
Tick me off?
...but what are you trying to do?
I'm amazed you've recovered this fast in just over half a month...
Tell me the reason... The reason!
No reason.
You're t-ticked off...?
Well, this is what I want to do, so I guess there's no way around it.

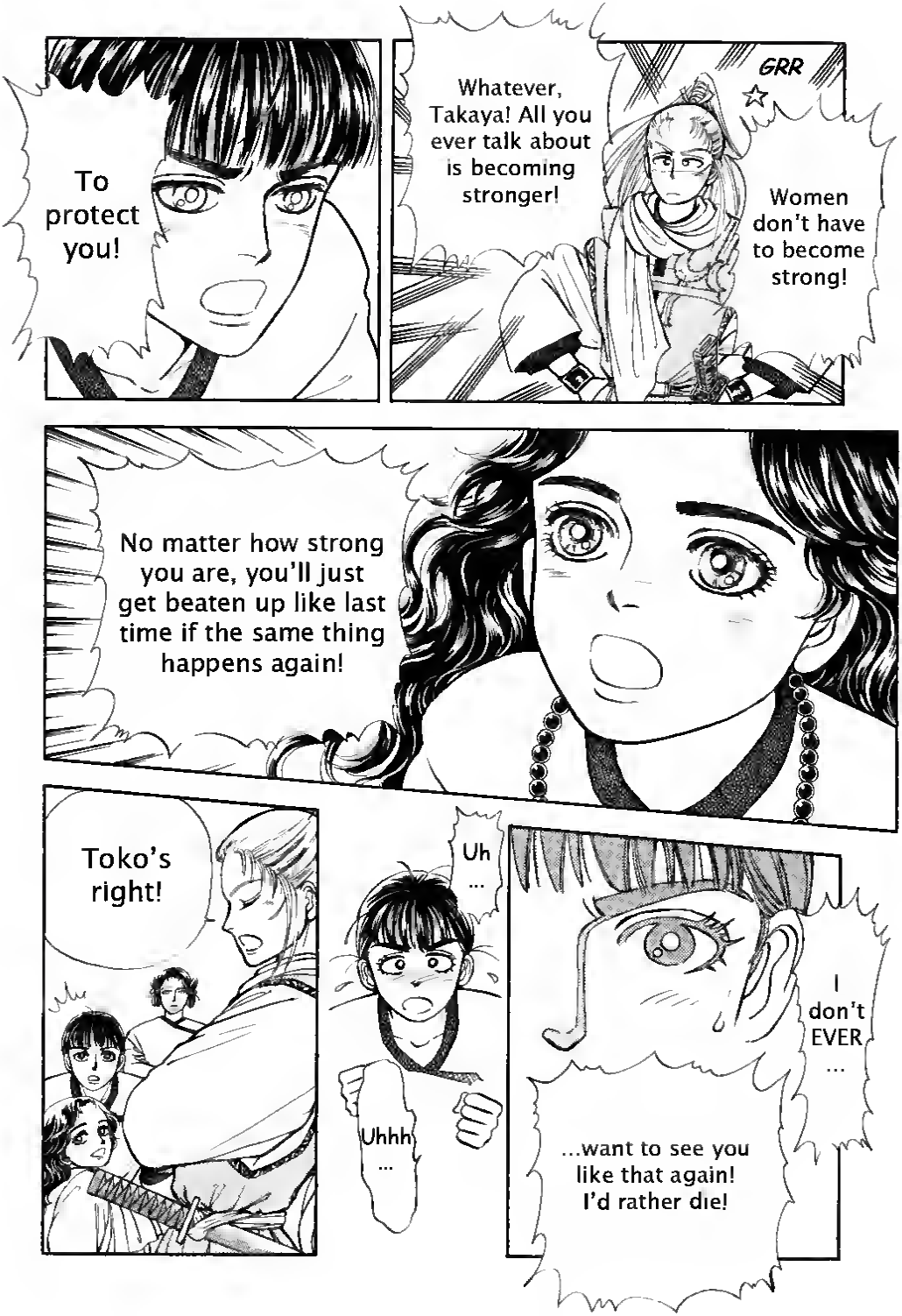

RING
...is an insult!
And an insult ...
That's an insult.
So that means Ichirota instead of me!?
I just want to get stronger.
...you're a woman!
B-but ...
Some day I'll be stronger than you!
Huh !?
So!?

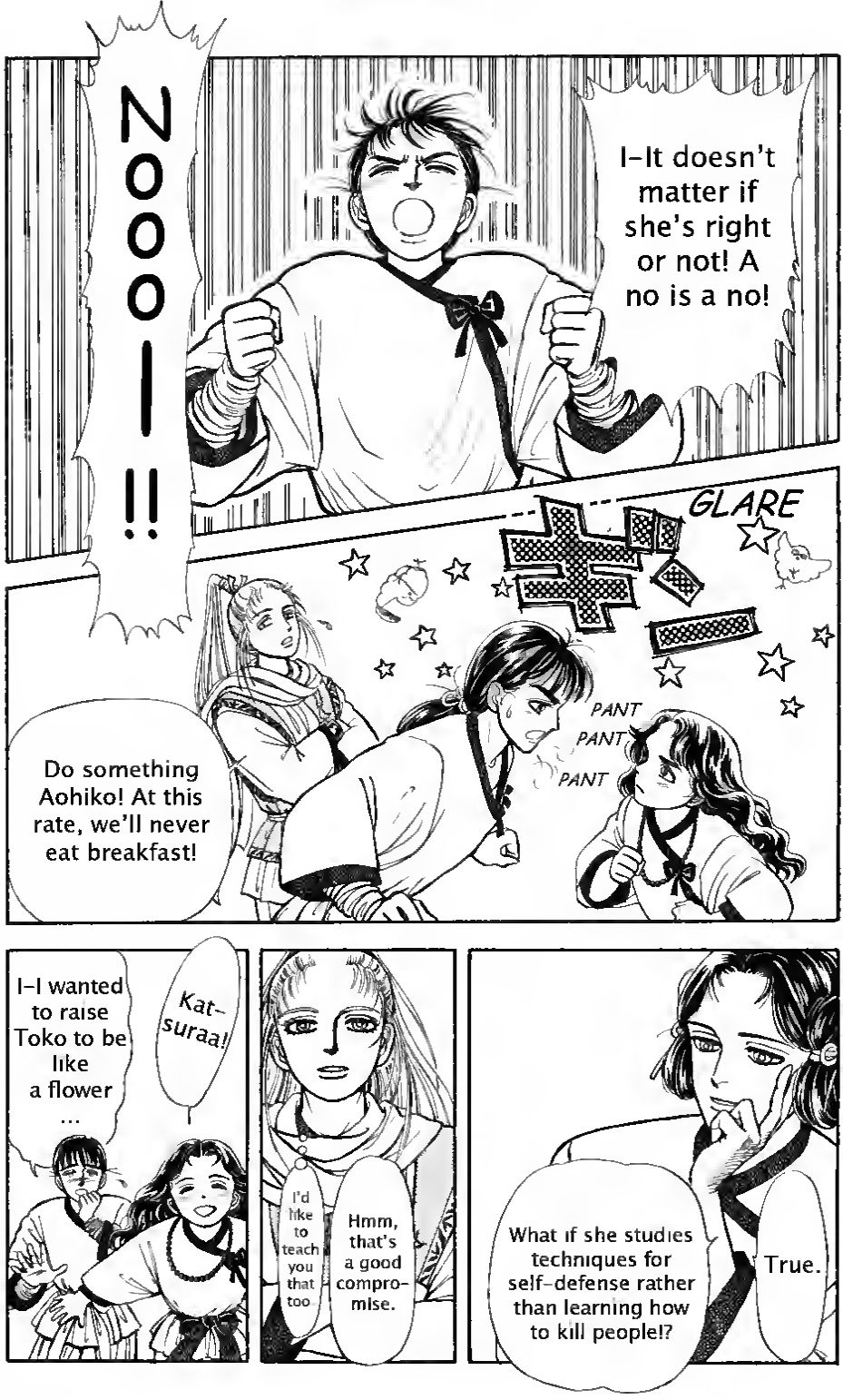
You'll regret it...
HE HE HE
You'll definitely regret switching from Katsura to me.
...but will you indulge Takaya?
... Kat- sura ...
Your anger is jus- tified ...
No I won't!

Let me go, Katsura!
R-right...
You're out of line! If you overheard this idiot, it's your job to give him a warning.
Young men go through all kinds of changes...
HMPH
No!
That's not it! I just want to become strong!
I...
I will too...

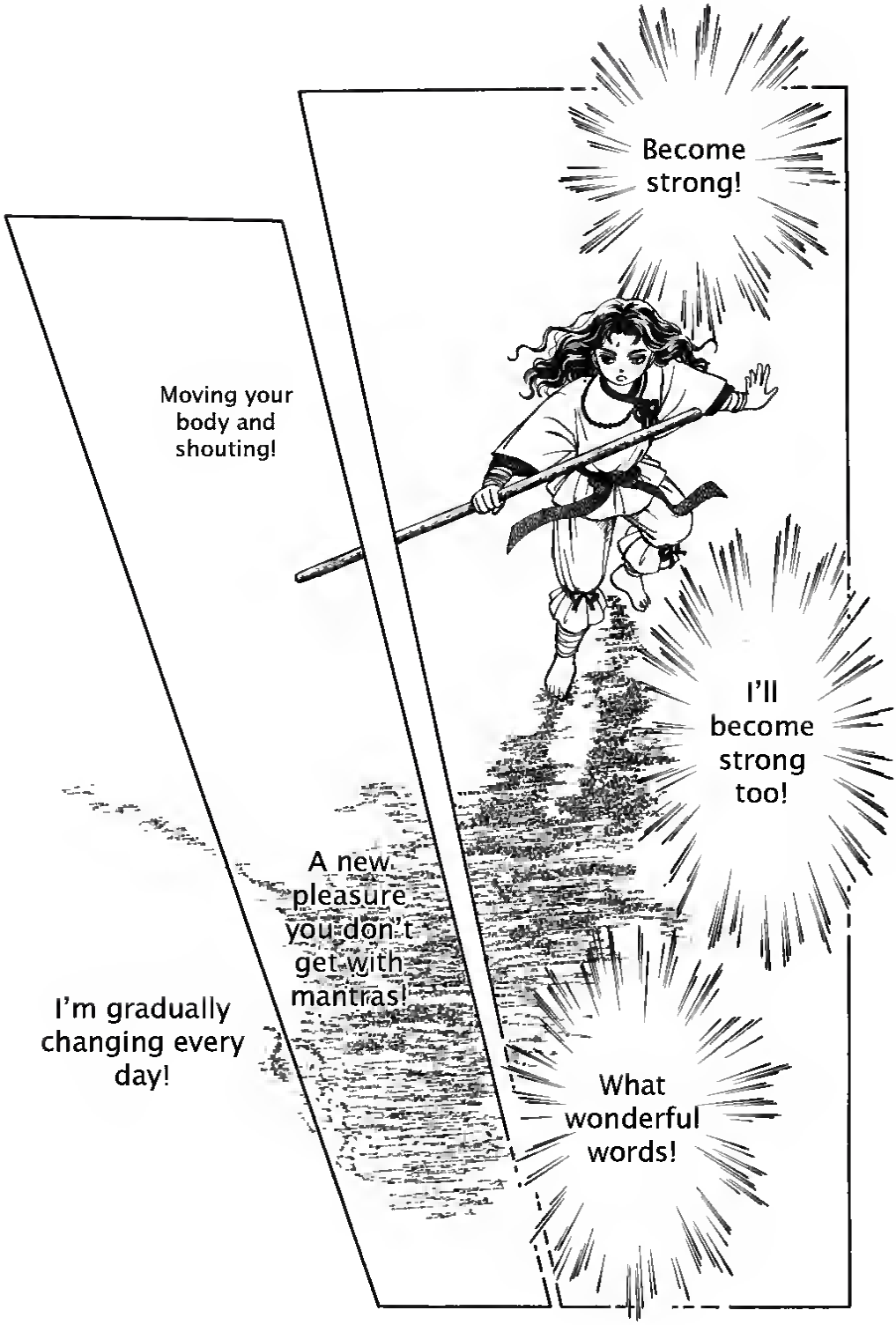
Toko?
I'll become strong too!
Toko ...
Hey ...
What... are you talking about?
I want Katsura to make me strong!

Say some-thing to her.
Aohi ko!
I'm not being silly!
HA HA HA
Don't be silly!
I'm gonna be strong like Katsura!
I've made up my mind!
No!
You're a GIRL!
What's gotten into you, Toko!?
I can become strong too!
So is Katsura!


To protect you!
Whatever, Takaya! All you ever talk about is becoming stronger!
GRR
Women don't have to become strong!
No matter how strong you are, you'll just get beaten up like last time if the same thing happens again!
Toko's right!
Uh ...
Uhhh ...
I don't EVER ...
...want to see you like that again! I'd rather die!


NOOO!!!
I-It doesn't matter if she's right or not! A no is a no!
GLARE
PANT
PANT
PANT
Do something Aohiko! At this rate, we'll never eat breakfast!
I-I wanted to raise Toko to be like a flower ...
Kat-suraa!
I'd like to teach you that too
Hmm, that's a good compro-mise.
What if she studies techniques for self-defense rather than learning how to kill people!?
True.

There, there.
My dre-eam ...
Ao-hiko -o!
Mm-hm!
So much for that plan.
Build up your strength and fight me at your own risk!
I'm not a man of restraint.
Taka ya!
Restraint is the one thing I'd like you to remember.
How crue l...
I'm being bullied!
So worried.. So worried
He's gonna pound you into mincemeat, you ingrate!
I'm gonna be stronger than you one day!
Ichiro-ta!


Become strong!
Moving your body and shouting!
I'll become strong too!
A new pleasure you don't get with mantras!
I'm gradually changing every day!
What wonderful words!

Risson has returned!
He's come back after three months!
All right! Time to depart!

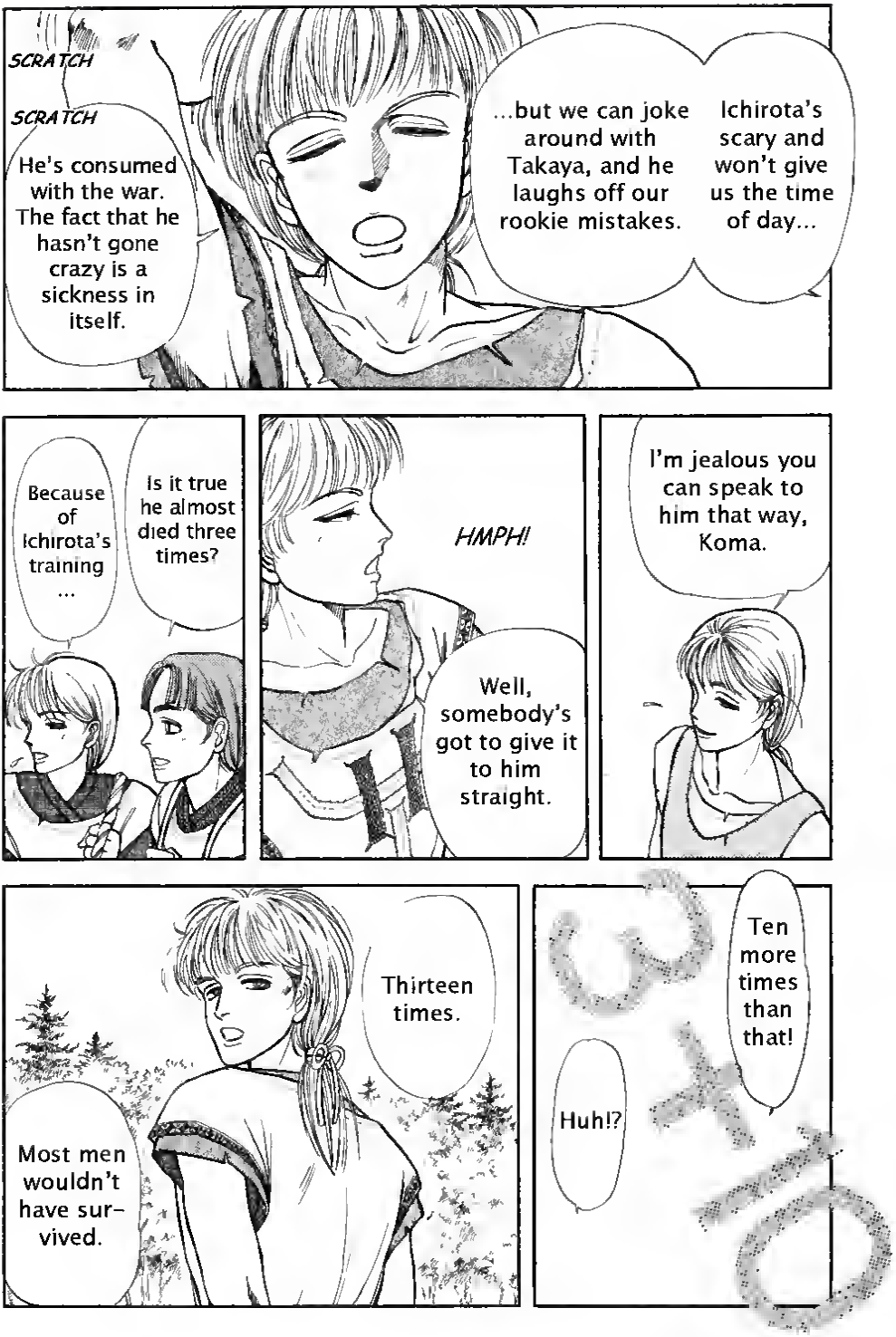
It's time for a new jour-ney!

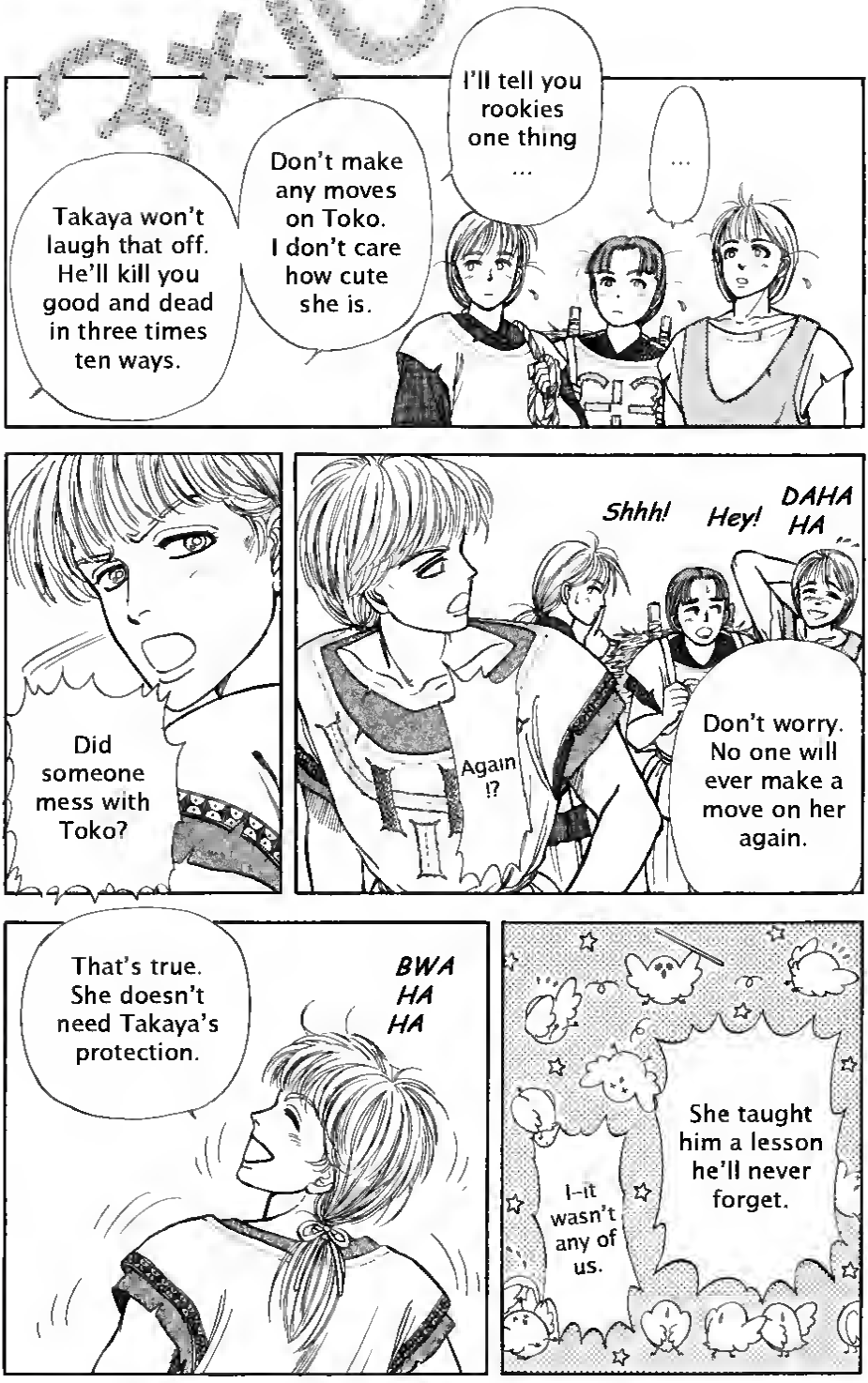
Ashihara no Mizuho no Kuni (Land of Abundant Reed Plains and Rice Fields)
This is a land that bears a divine name.
Wakoku (Country of Wa)
For all eternity... It shall never be called by this secret name, though the air has resounded with its many assumed names.
Oyashima (Great Country of Eight Islands)
Hi no Moto (Origin of the Sun)
Kotodama no Sakiwau Kuni (Land Blessed with the Power of Words)
Nihon
Hi Izuru Kuni (Land of the Rising Sun)
Shikishima no Yamato Koku (Wide Land of Yamato)
Fuso Country
Kamin-gara Kotoages-enu Kuni (Land Where Men Do Not Speak Their Minds, As Willed By the Gods)
Nippon

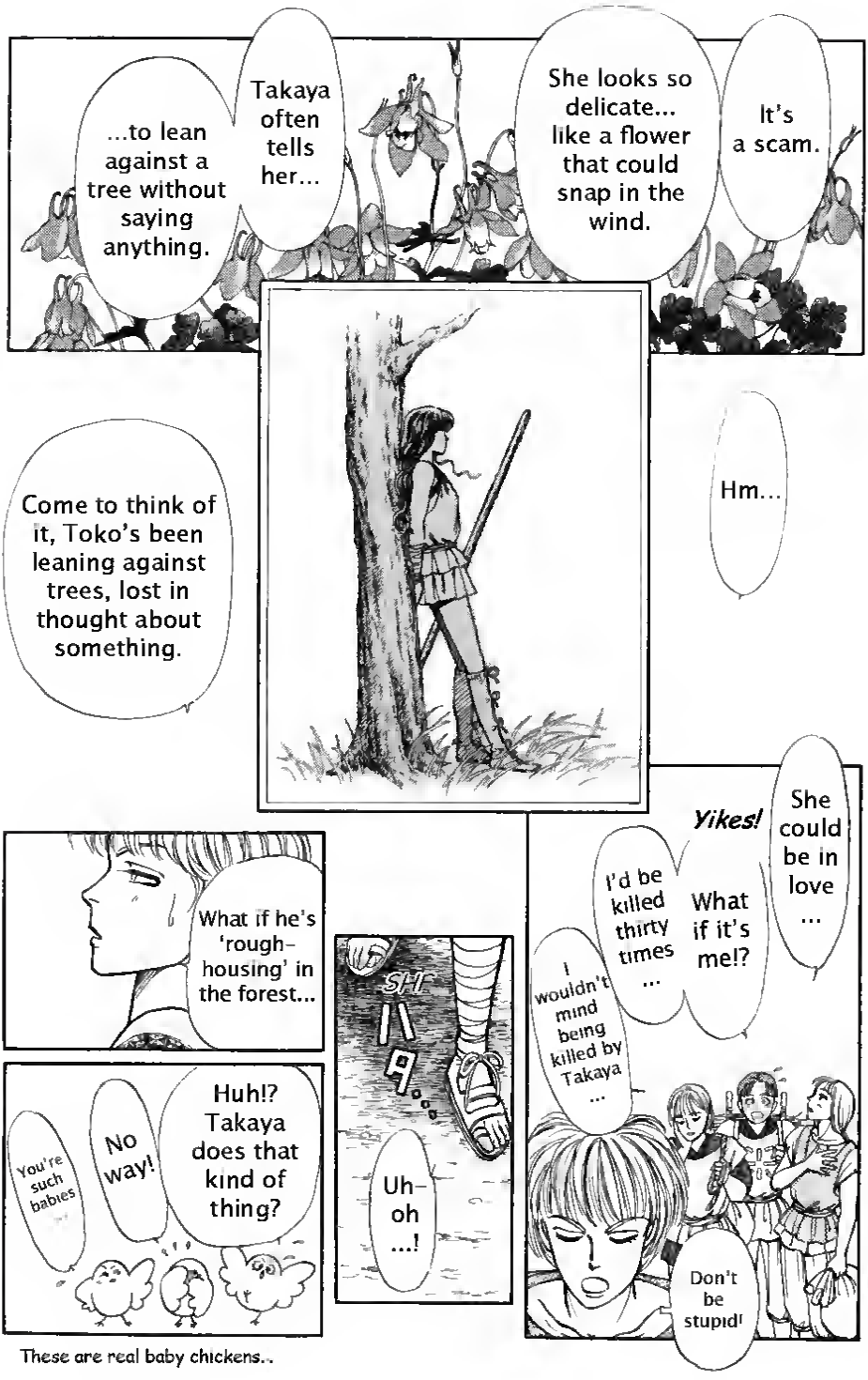
Thus it shall never be ruled
by any god or anyone
claiming to be the
"One True God."

This is a land that
bears a divine name.

Takaya was dragged into the forest by some girls.
Hey!
Aohiko's looking for Takaya and Toko. Have you seen them around?
Every time we come into contact with a tribe, the women chase after him...
Again ?
Girls!?
Well, only Takaya can match Ichirota's skill and bravery.
Yeah!
Yeah!
Now don't get carried away...
He can't help it.
He's the kind of guy even men fall for.

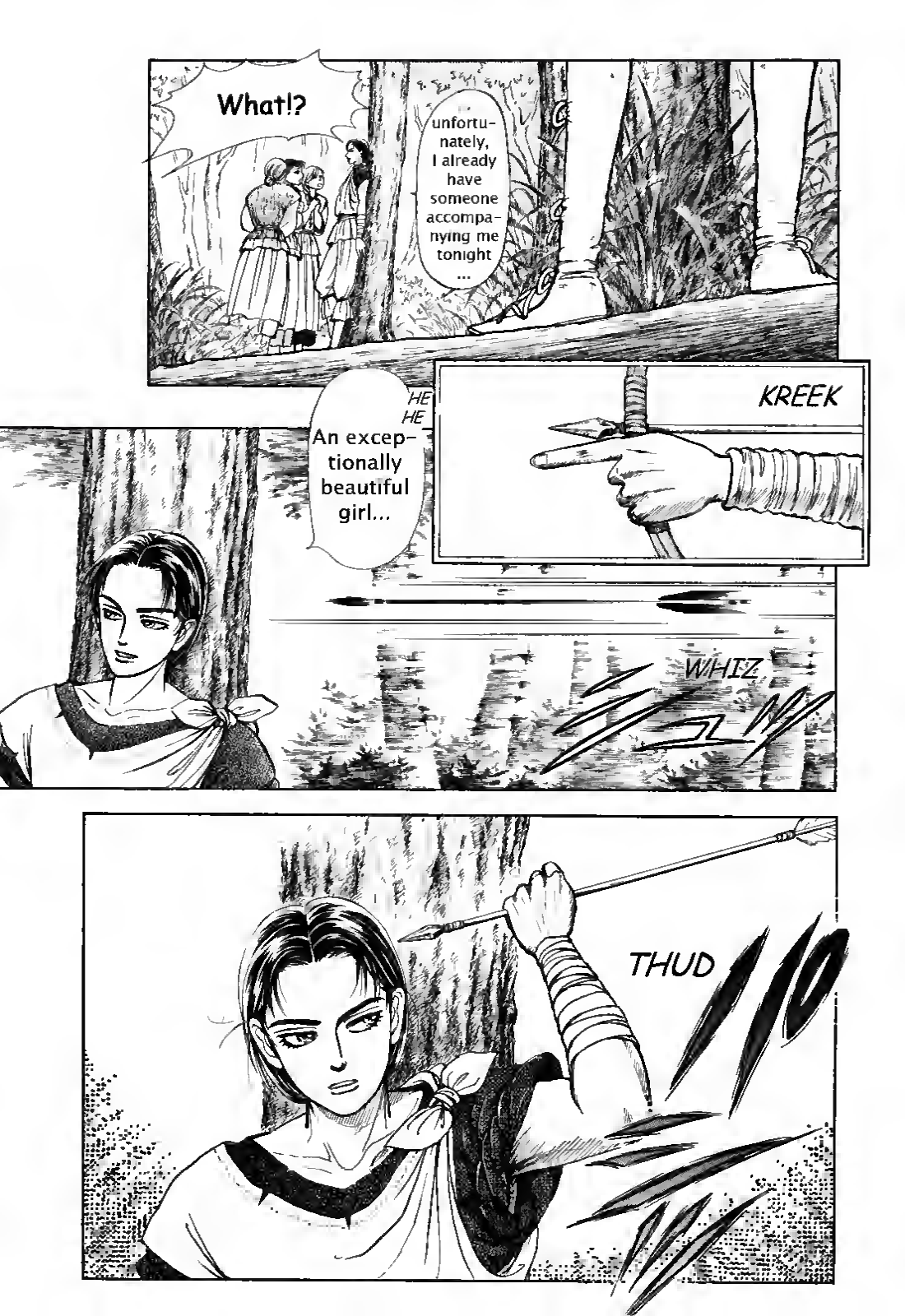

SCRATCH
SCRATCH
He's consumed with the war. The fact that he hasn't gone crazy is a sickness in itself.
...but we can joke around with Takaya, and he laughs off our rookie mistakes.
Ichirota's scary and won't give us the time of day...
Because of Ichirota's training ...
Is it true he almost died three times?
HMPH!
Well, somebody's got to give it to him straight.
I'm jealous you can speak to him that way, Koma.
Most men wouldn't have survived.
Thirteen times.
Huh!?
Ten more times than that!

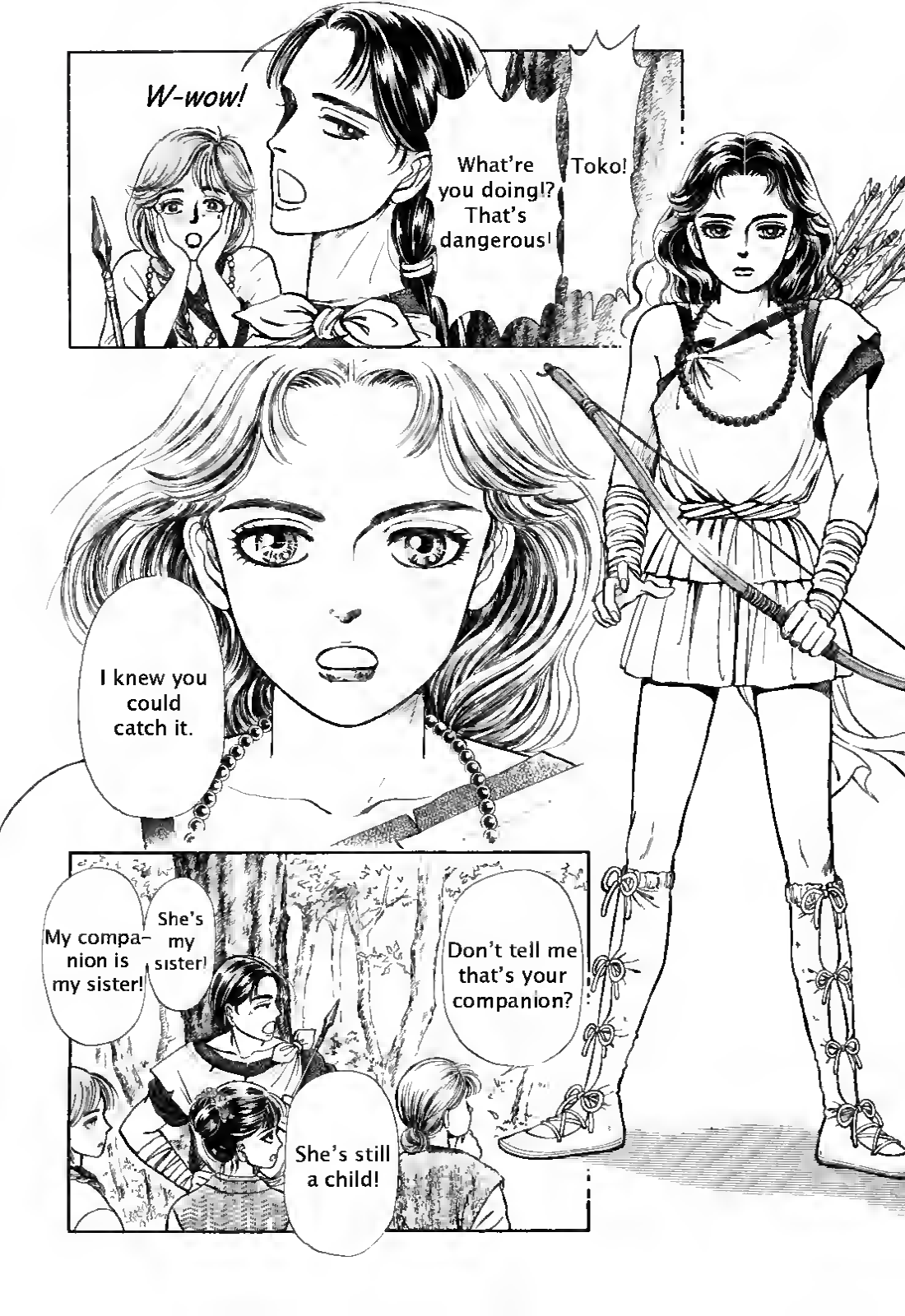

I'll tell you rookies one thing ...
...
Don't make any moves on Toko. I don't care how cute she is.
Takaya won't laugh that off. He'll kill you good and dead in three times ten ways.
Shhh!
Hey!
DAHA HA
Again !?
Don't worry. No one will ever make a move on her again.
Did someone mess with Toko?
That's true. She doesn't need Takaya's protection.
BWA HA HA
She taught him a lesson he'll never forget.
I-it wasn't any of us.


...to lean against a tree without saying anything.
Takaya often tells her...
She looks so delicate... like a flower that could snap in the wind.
It's a scam.
Come to think of it, Toko's been leaning against trees, lost in thought about something.
Hm...
What if he's 'rough-housing' in the forest...
SH!
Uh-oh ...!
Yikes!
She could be in love ...
What if it's me!?
I'd be killed thirty times ...
I wouldn't mind being killed by Takaya ...
Don't be stupid!
Huh!? Takaya does that kind of thing?
No way!
You're such babies

These are real baby chickens..

...I'm a nomad after all.
I'm flattered, ladies, but...
It's not fair!
No cutting in line!
Hey!
I want to take care of you day and night.
So... just for the time you camp here.
I have a thing for bad girls, but...

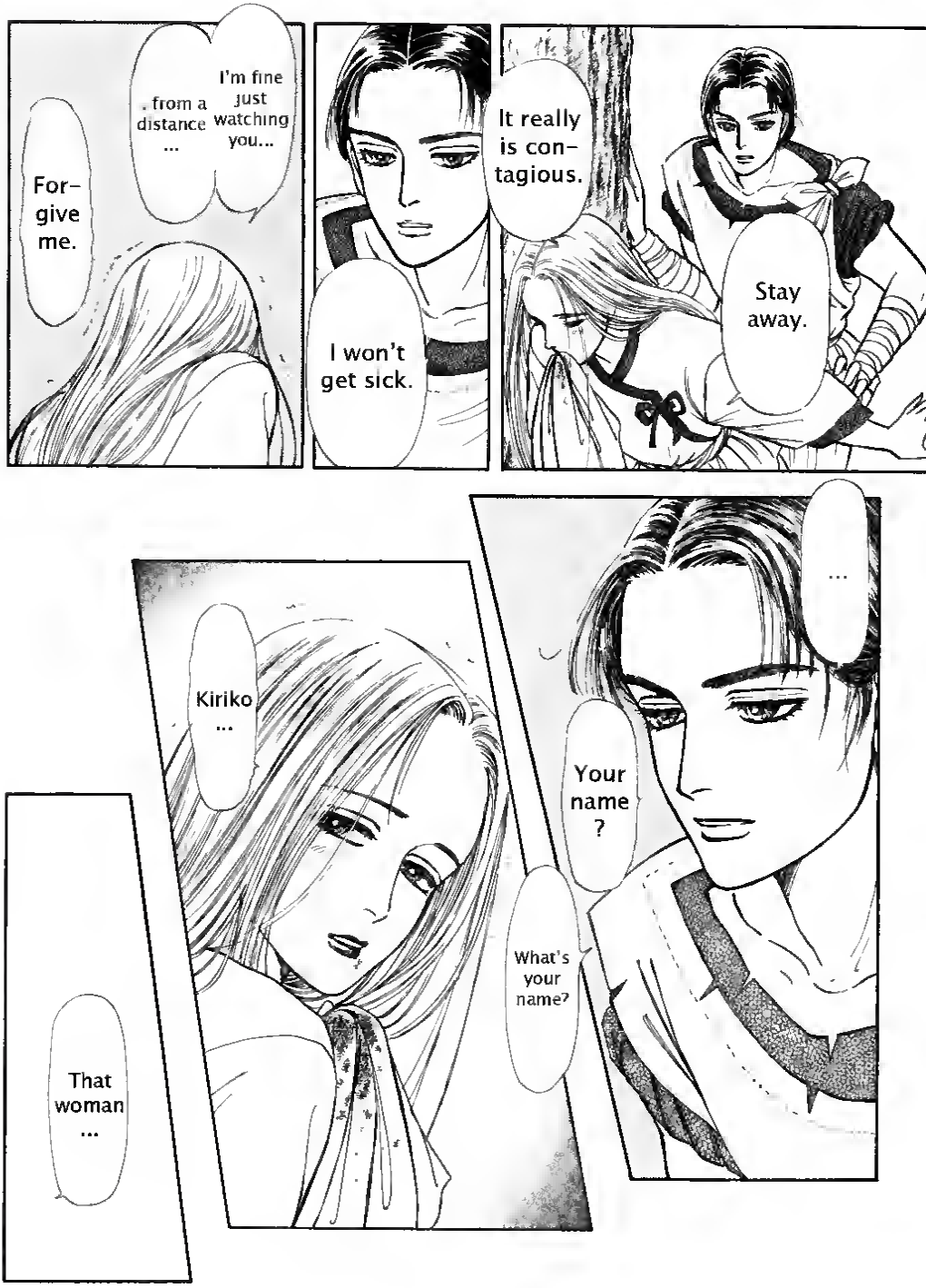

What!?
unfortu-
nately,
I already
have
someone
accompa-
nying me
tonight
...
KREEK
HE
HE
An excep-
tionally
beautiful
girl...
WHIZ
THUD


W-wow!
What're you doing!? That's dangerous!
Toko!
I knew you could catch it.
My compa-nion is my sister!
She's my sister!
Don't tell me that's your companion?
She's still a child!

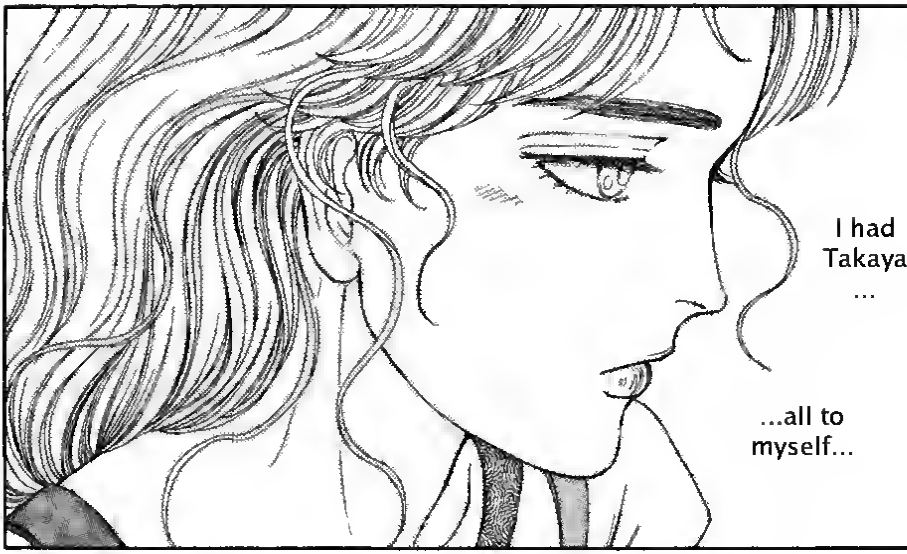
COUGH
You don't want to mess with my sister.
Sister !?
He's right.
You jerk! What a bad joke.
...and he wants to meet you too.
A distinguished hermit who heard about Risson has traveled a long way to speak with him...
You too, Toko!
Hurry back!
Takaya! Aohiko's looking for you!
Once again, a group of love-crazed girls gathering...
Ooh dreamy!
Check out that one!
Wait ...
W ...

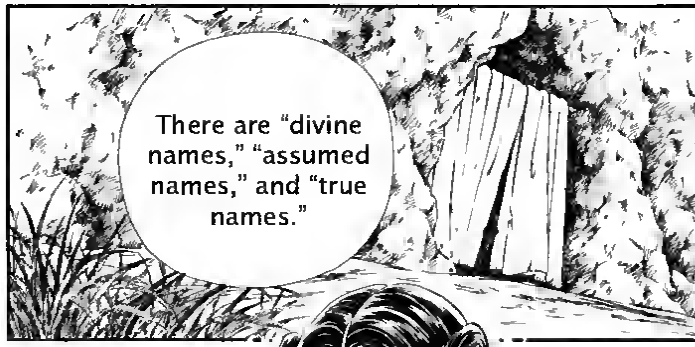
LOVER
間夫
Loverrr
That man is my lover. If you mess with him, you'll have to answer to me.
Ooh!
So you're that kind of guy!
Ka-Kat-sura!
Oh my gosh!
Huh!?
A hot man!
He's all man any way you look at it.
You're blushing all over again, you naughty boy!
WHEW
BA-DUMP BA DUMP
That's what you call a "double-edged sword."
You can tell, right!?
She's a woman! A woman!

Hah! "Lover." She's only ever treated me like a kid!
Nyah!
Let's go, Toko!
Knock yourselves out!
Hey, wait... That girl...!
COUGH COUGH COUGH
They don't look that alike...
Her sleepy face is even cuter.
and makes that pouty face.
Even when she sticks out her tongue
Toko's so cute!
Any way ...
Are you okay ...?
Really ?
Huh !?
COUGH
コホ
コホ
That disease is conta-gious!
Oh no! She's coughing up blood.
What's wrong ?
コホ
COUGH


I'm fine just watching you...
. from a distance ...
For-give me.
I won't get sick.
It really is con-tagious.
Stay away.
...
Your name ?
What's your name?
Kiriko ...
That woman ...

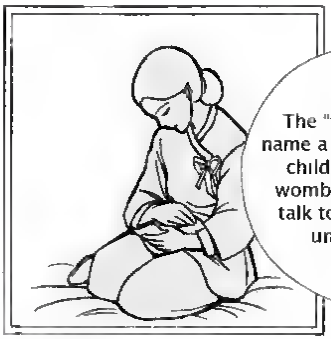
The one with long hair behind the tree...
She was... staring at Takaya...
Staring at him.
Are you jeal-ous!?
Takaya's a troublemaker, but he can't help it.
He's got superior looks and skills, and, to add to the stupidity, he's so innocent!
Women swoon whenever a smile crosses his innocent face.
When we first met, he was just a boy.
He's still got that baby face, but it's nice and lean now.
How many years has it been? Seven!? Eight?
How time flies ...
I miss those days...


I had Takaya ...
...all to myself...

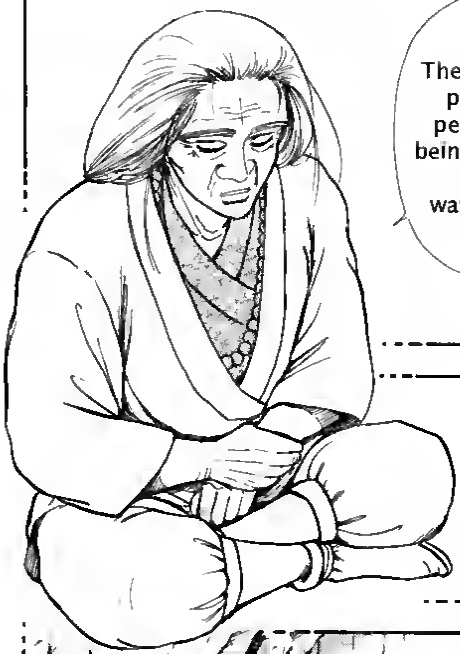

There are "divine names," "assumed names," and "true names."

I heard that my tribe used both until a short while ago.
I know about "assumed names" and "true names."

Then, after birth, it was given another name–the "assumed name" everyone used from then on...



The "true name" was the name a mother first gave her child when it was in the womb. She would secretly talk to it using that name until it was born...

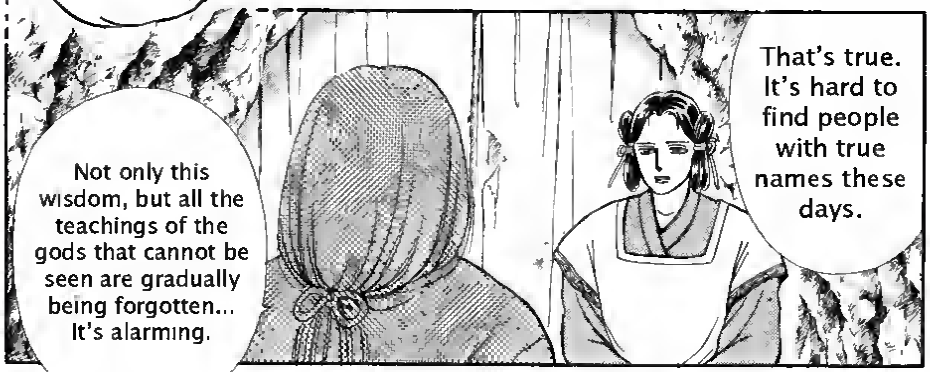


The true name protects a person from being led astray by evil wavelengths.

Right. They say that the sound of a name is etched into a person's soul, and knowledge of this wavelength allows others to start influencing or controlling the person.

★ Sound of a name: the wavelength (vibration) an individual possesses

But this wisdom faded away during the long period of peace...



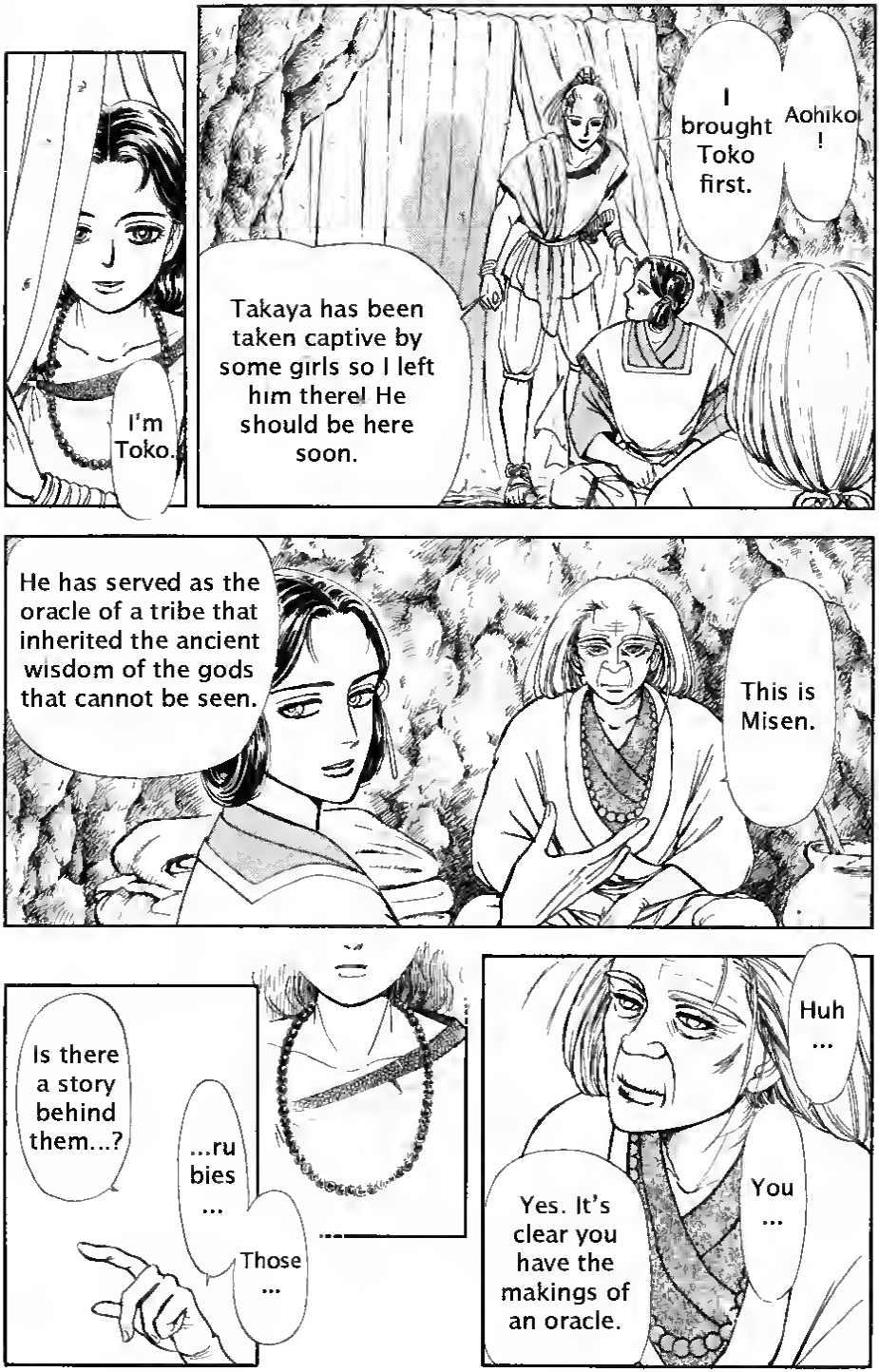
That's true. It's hard to find people with true names these days.

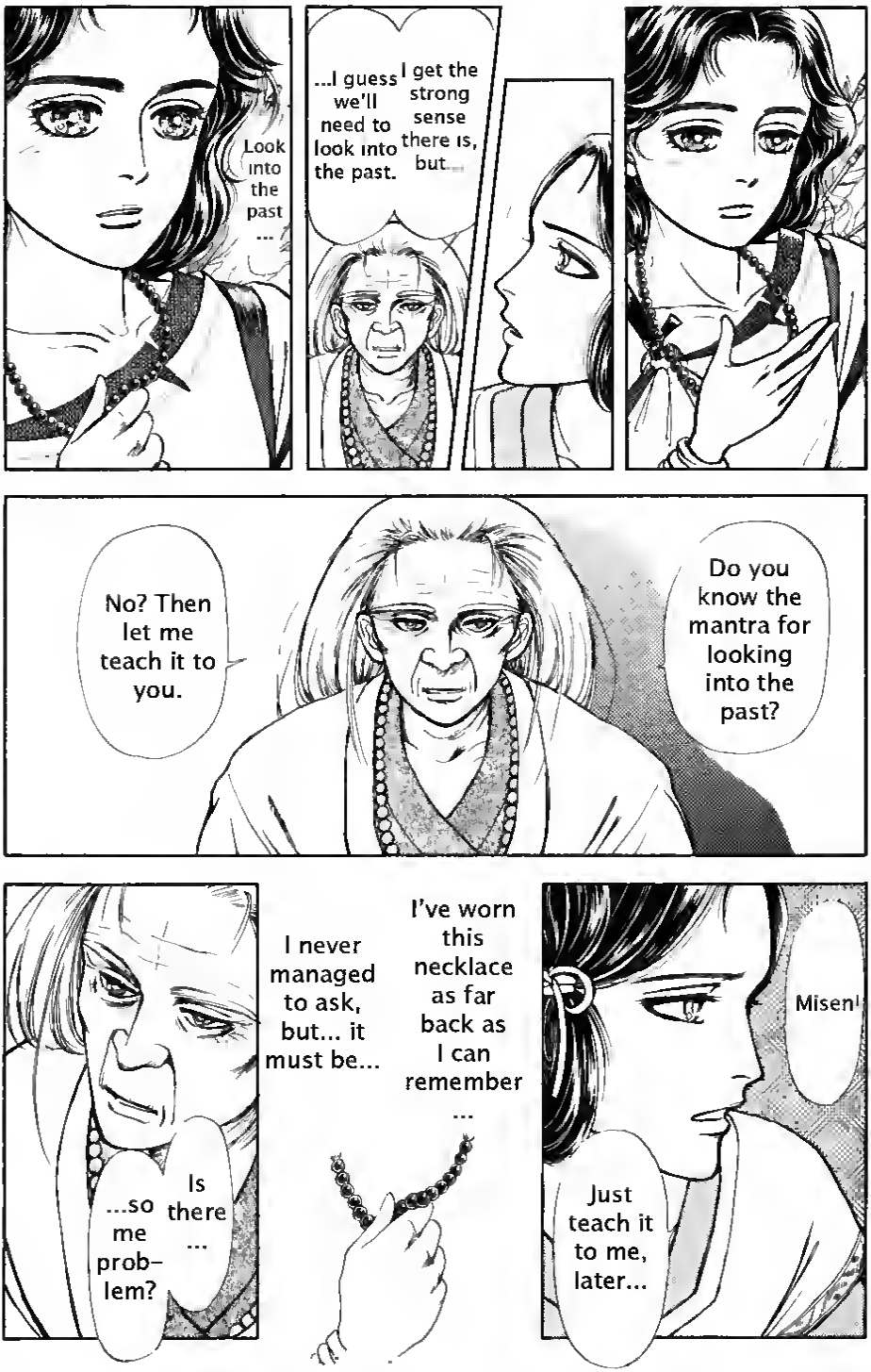
Not only this wisdom, but all the teachings of the gods that cannot be seen are gradually being forgotten... It's alarming.

So... what are "divine names"?
"Divine names" are literally names given by the gods that have a special sound.
Each of the gods that can be seen has a "divine name."
It is even said that if you know the divine name of a god, you can control that god.
But it is next to impossible to learn a god's divine name unless the god reveals it to you.
This ancient book says, "This is a land that bears a divine name"...
Yes ...
So "Risson" is an "assumed name."
If the legends in this book are true, this island country has a divine name and will never fall under the control of anyone... not even the gods...
Not even the demigods ...

The gods that cannot be seen gave this small land a divine name to protect it ...
... but ...
Not even the demigods ...
Were not the many swords given to us by the gods that cannot be seen meant solely for this war...?
...that means it is not under their control. So what are we to make of this war?
At this rate, it is only a matter of time before this land goes the way of the demon gods.
These are not words that someone who has rallied around the demigods should say, but the odds are against them!

There must be someone who gave the gods that can be seen their divine names...
Hermit
What kind of connection would this being who knows the wisdom of divine names have with the gods that cannot be seen?
Do the gods that can be seen know the being like their mother?


I'm Toko.
Takaya has been taken captive by some girls so I left him there! He should be here soon.
I brought Toko first.
Aohiko!
He has served as the oracle of a tribe that inherited the ancient wisdom of the gods that cannot be seen.
This is Misen.
Is there a story behind them...?
...rubies...
Those...
Huh...
You...
Yes. It's clear you have the makings of an oracle.

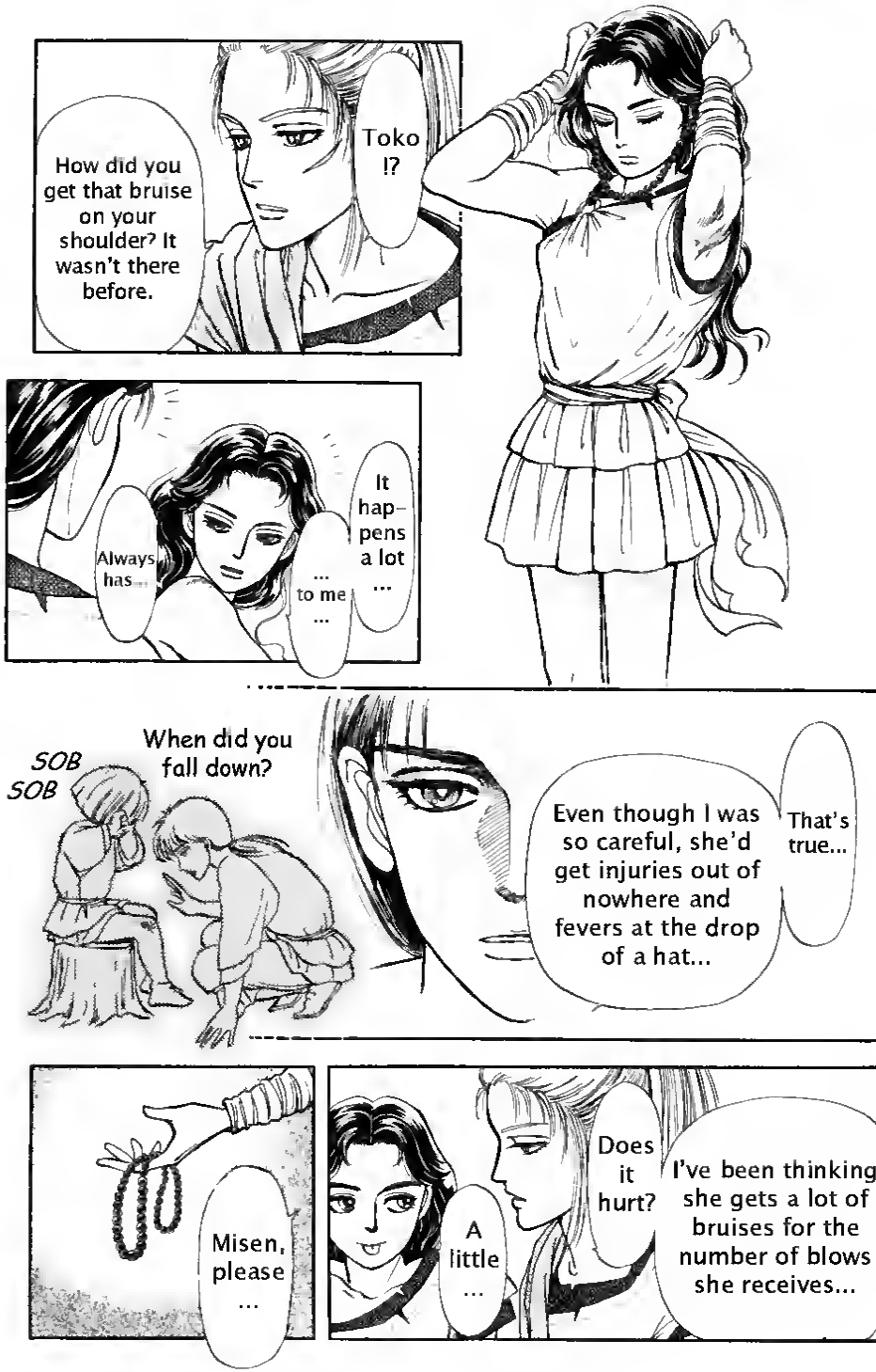

Look into the past ...
...I guess we'll need to look into the past.
I get the strong sense there is, but...
No? Then let me teach it to you.
Do you know the mantra for looking into the past?
...so me prob-lem?
Is there ...
I never managed to ask, but... it must be...
I've worn this necklace as far back as I can remember ...
Misen!
Just teach it to me, later...

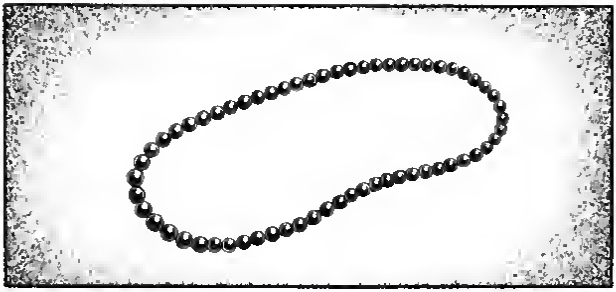
What's wrong? Both of you look pale...
Please teach me the mantra for looking into the past...
To... ko.
If these rubies have any clues...
I... want to know ...
...where I came from.

004
FWISH
Ta...ka
ya.
When
...
...

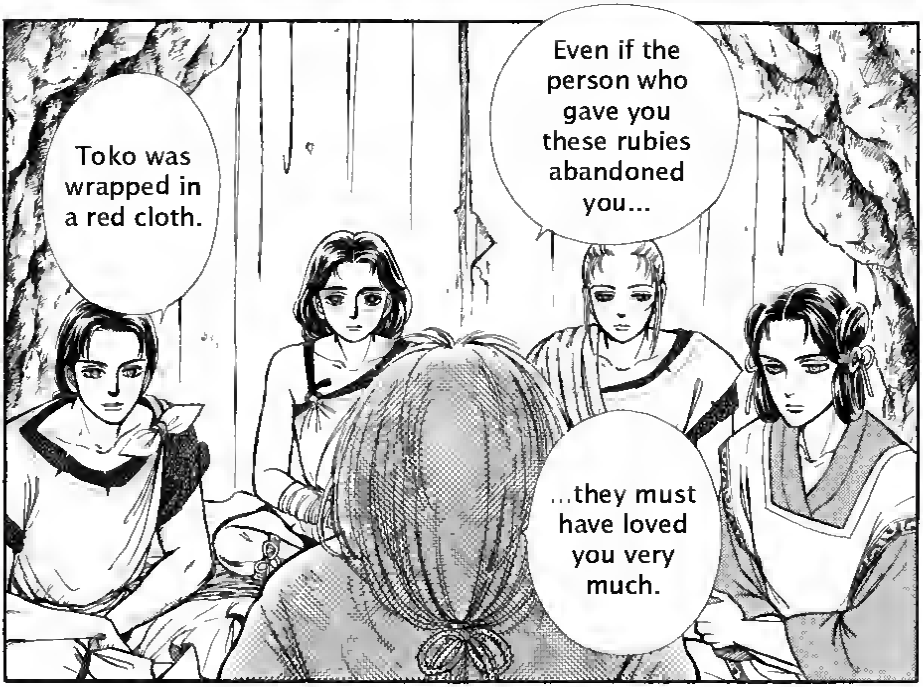
...so stupid...
I'm...
When did...!? Who told you!?
Answer me! Toko!
Toko!
This will push Takaya further away.
...I realized I was found and raised by Takaya.
Once I pieced them toge-ther ...
...people in the tribe said...
...bits and snatches of things ...
I just heard ...

You can't hide anything from a child with good intuition...
HMM...
...
It doesn't matter...
ぎゅっ HUG
It doesn't change the fact that she's my little sister!
Facts are facts.
Then it's better that she knows, right?
Hoo boy.
This kid's in a bit of a bind
Is that ... so...
Further away ...

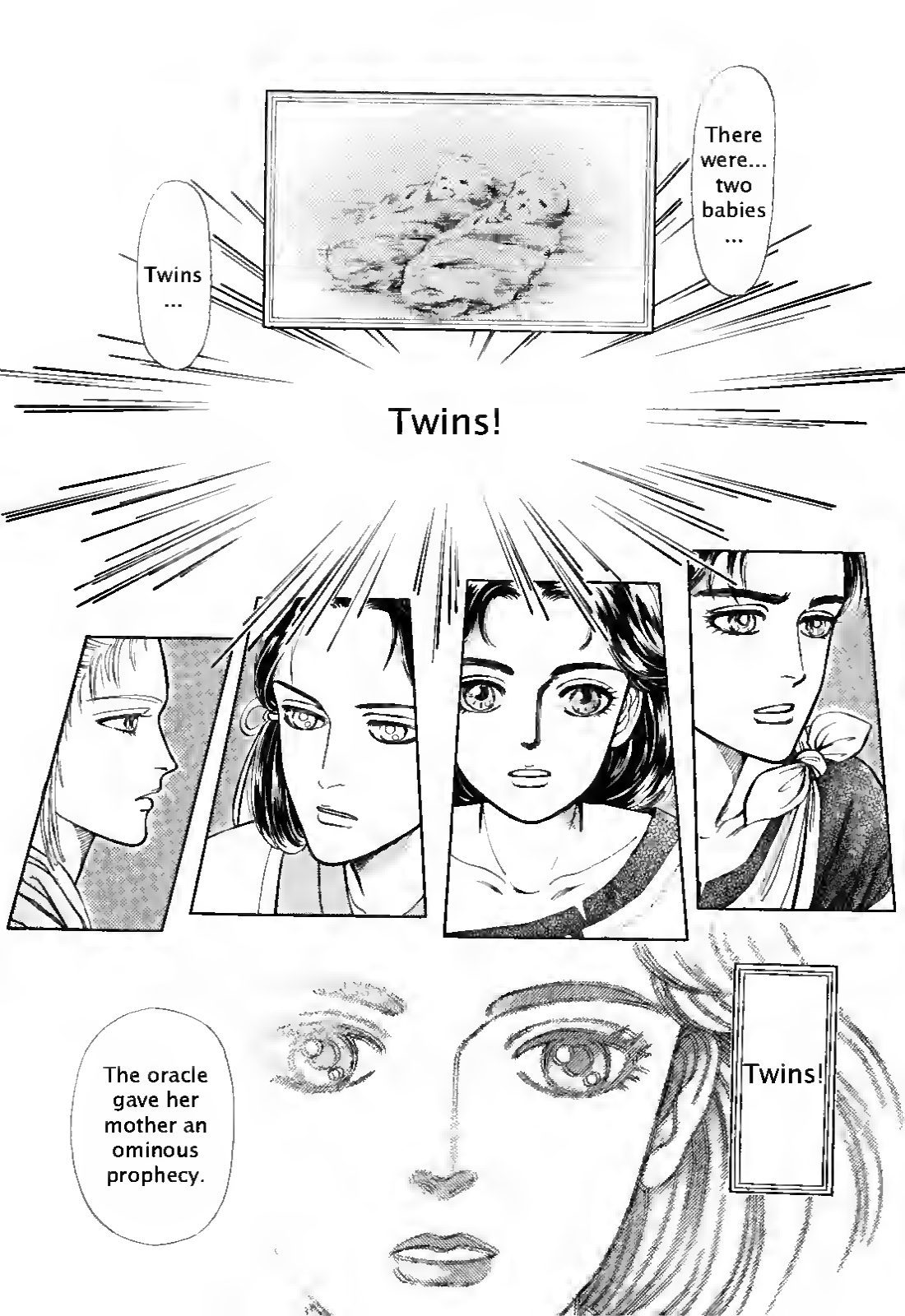

How did you get that bruise on your shoulder? It wasn't there before.
Toko !?
Always has...
... to me ...
It hap-pens a lot ...
SOB SOB
When did you fall down?
Even though I was so careful, she'd get injuries out of nowhere and fevers at the drop of a hat...
That's true...
Misen, please ...
A little ...
Does it hurt?
I've been thinking she gets a lot of bruises for the number of blows she receives...



Many people wear red underclothes these days without knowing why.
The effect colors have are greater than we think.
...the color red is said to strengthen your immunity and ability to heal.
As you may know ...

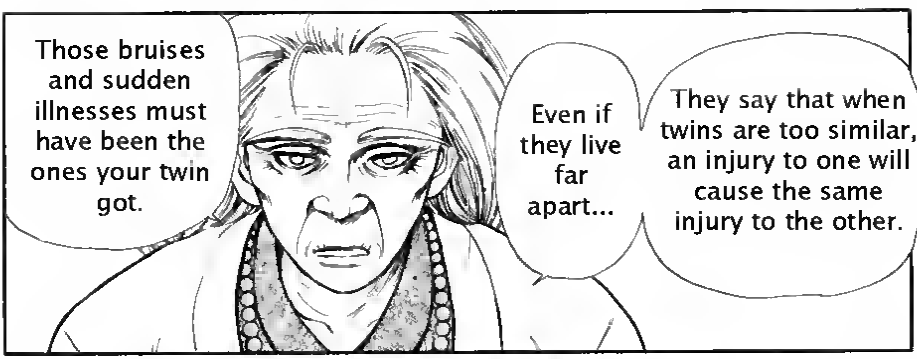

Toko was wrapped in a red cloth.
Even if the person who gave you these rubies abandoned you...
...they must have loved you very much.

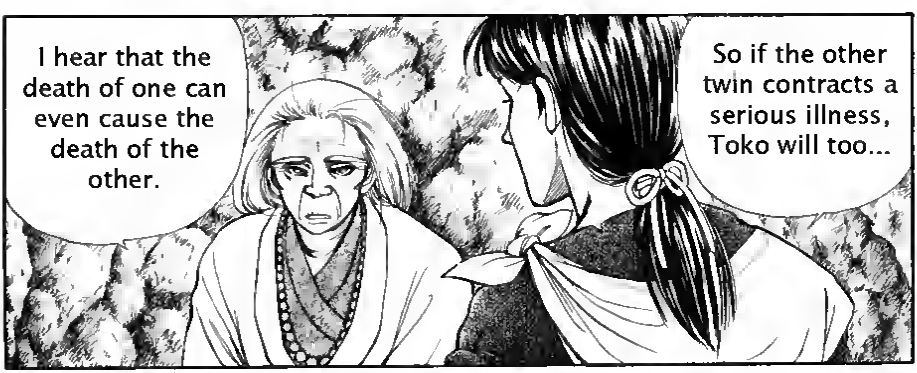
Her mother had oracle blood...


There were... two babies ...
Twins ...
Twins!
Twins!
The oracle gave her mother an ominous prophecy.

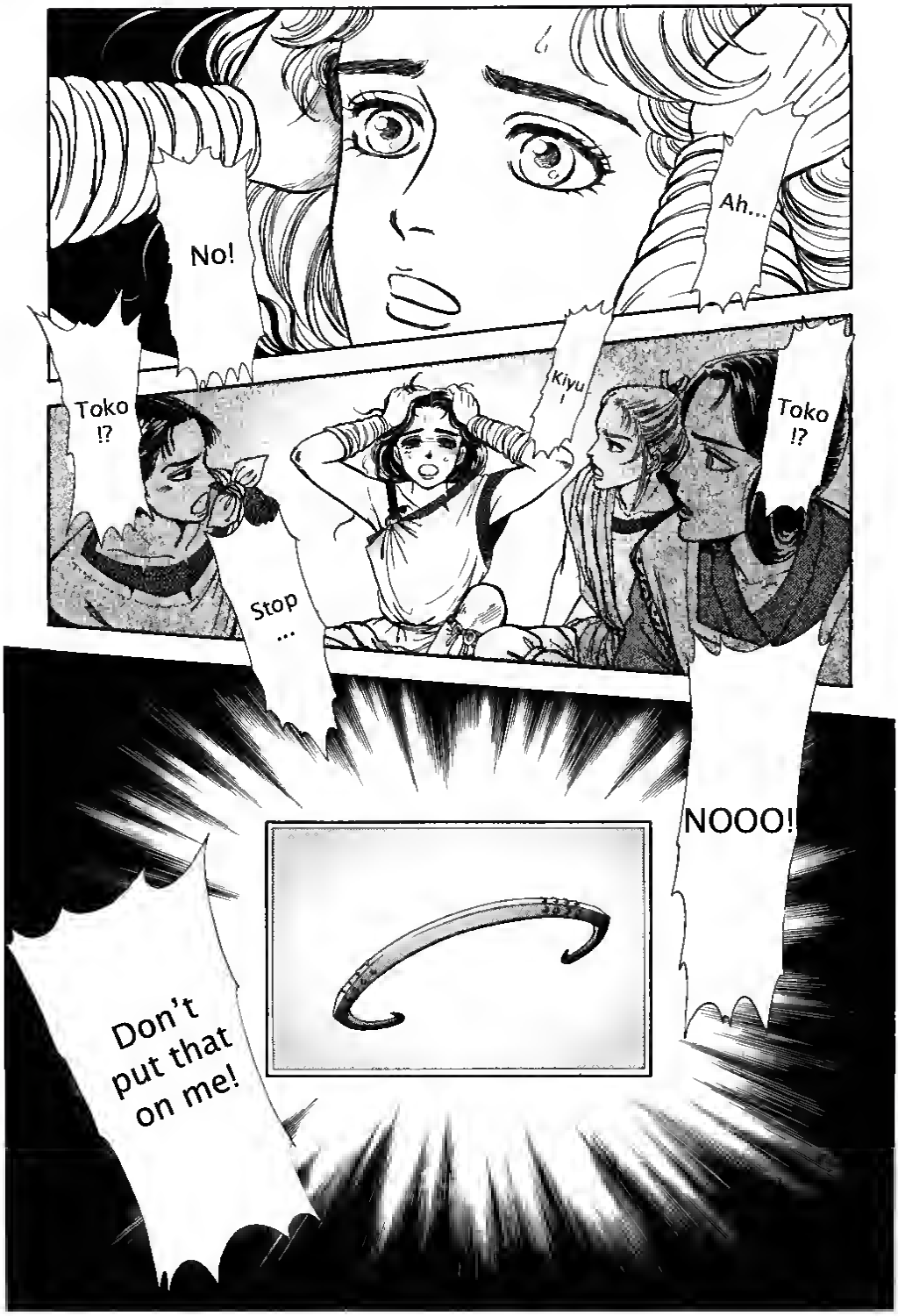
Send one down the river.
That was...
These chil-dren...
...are des-tined to kill each other.
Someone will be fated to hear its cries and take care of it.

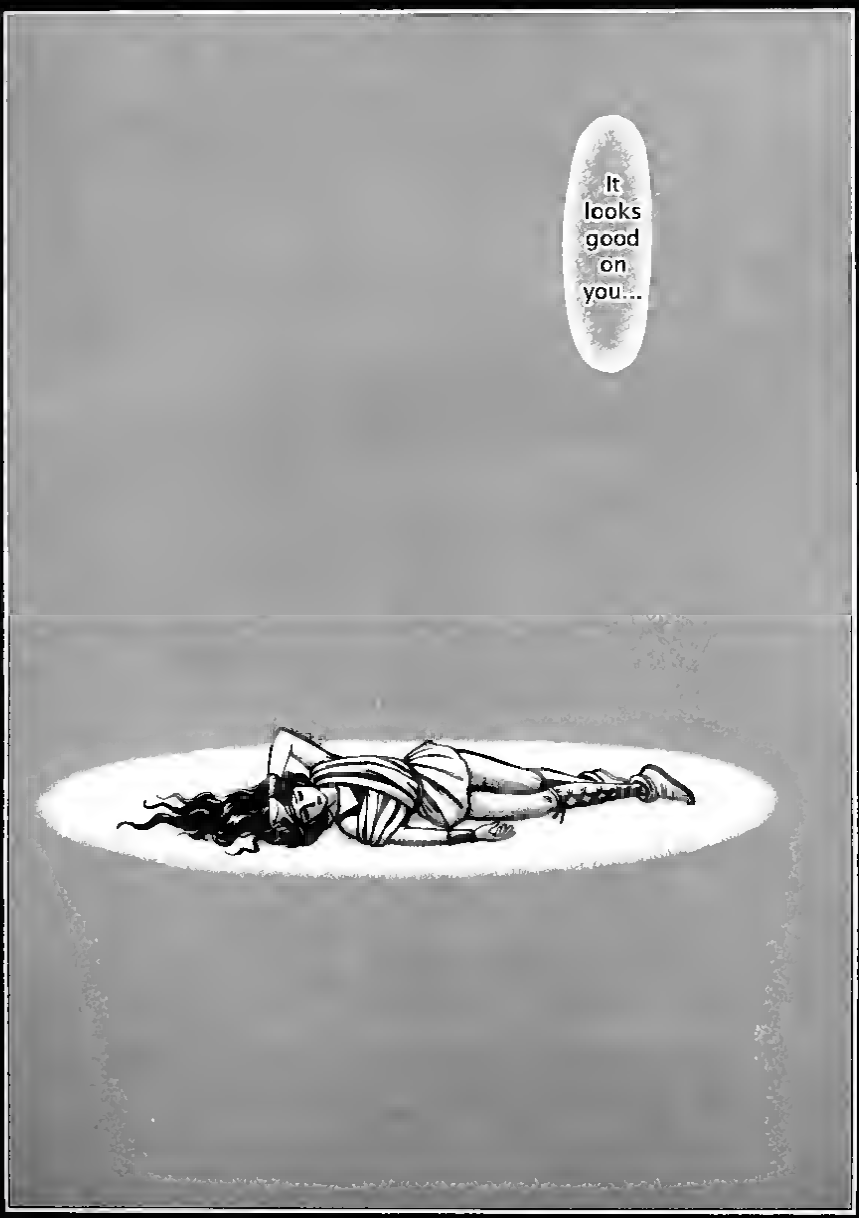
That girl was...


Those bruises and sudden illnesses must have been the ones your twin got.
Even if they live far apart...
They say that when twins are too similar, an injury to one will cause the same injury to the other.

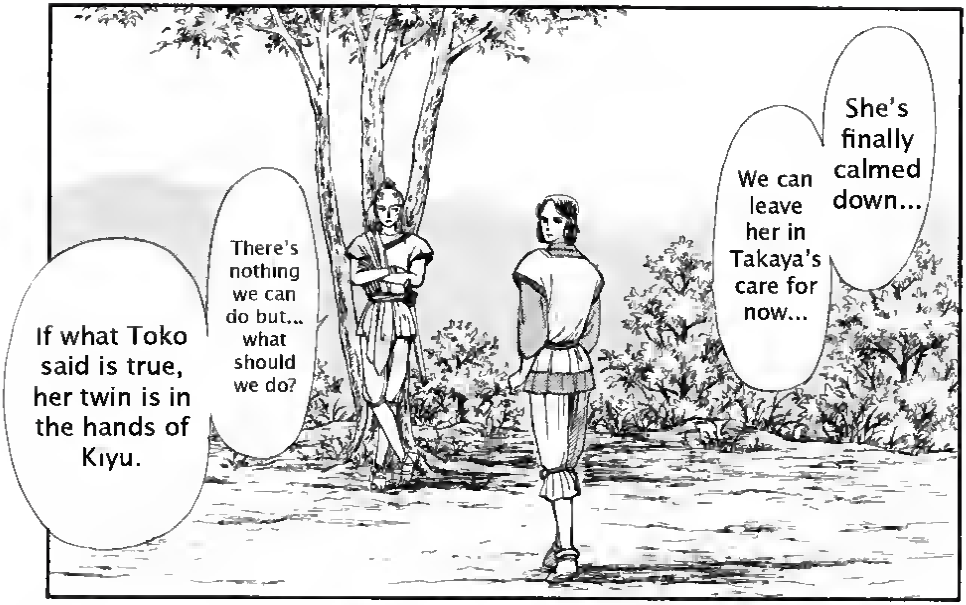

I hear that the death of one can even cause the death of the other.
So if the other twin contracts a serious illness, Toko will too...

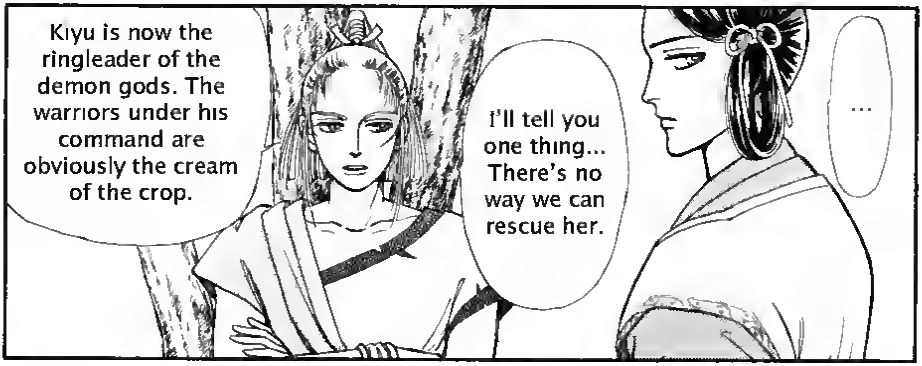
She was kid-napped...
Oh... Now I get it...
...kidnapped by the demon gods...
Ah ...

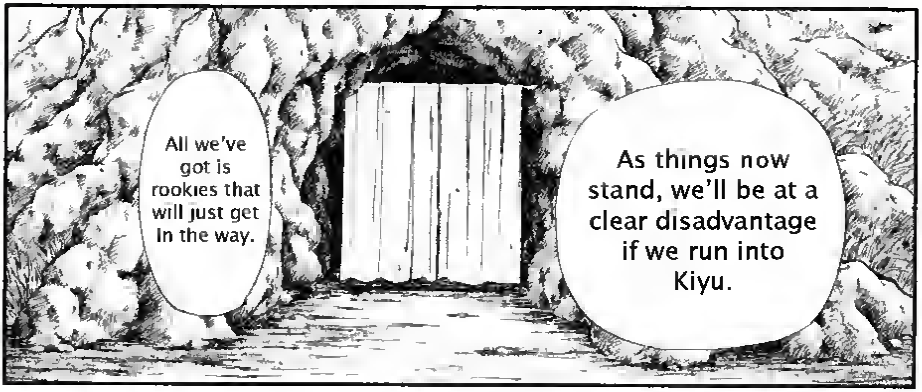

No!
Ah...
Toko !?
Kiyu
Toko !?
Stop ...
NOOO!
Don't put that on me!

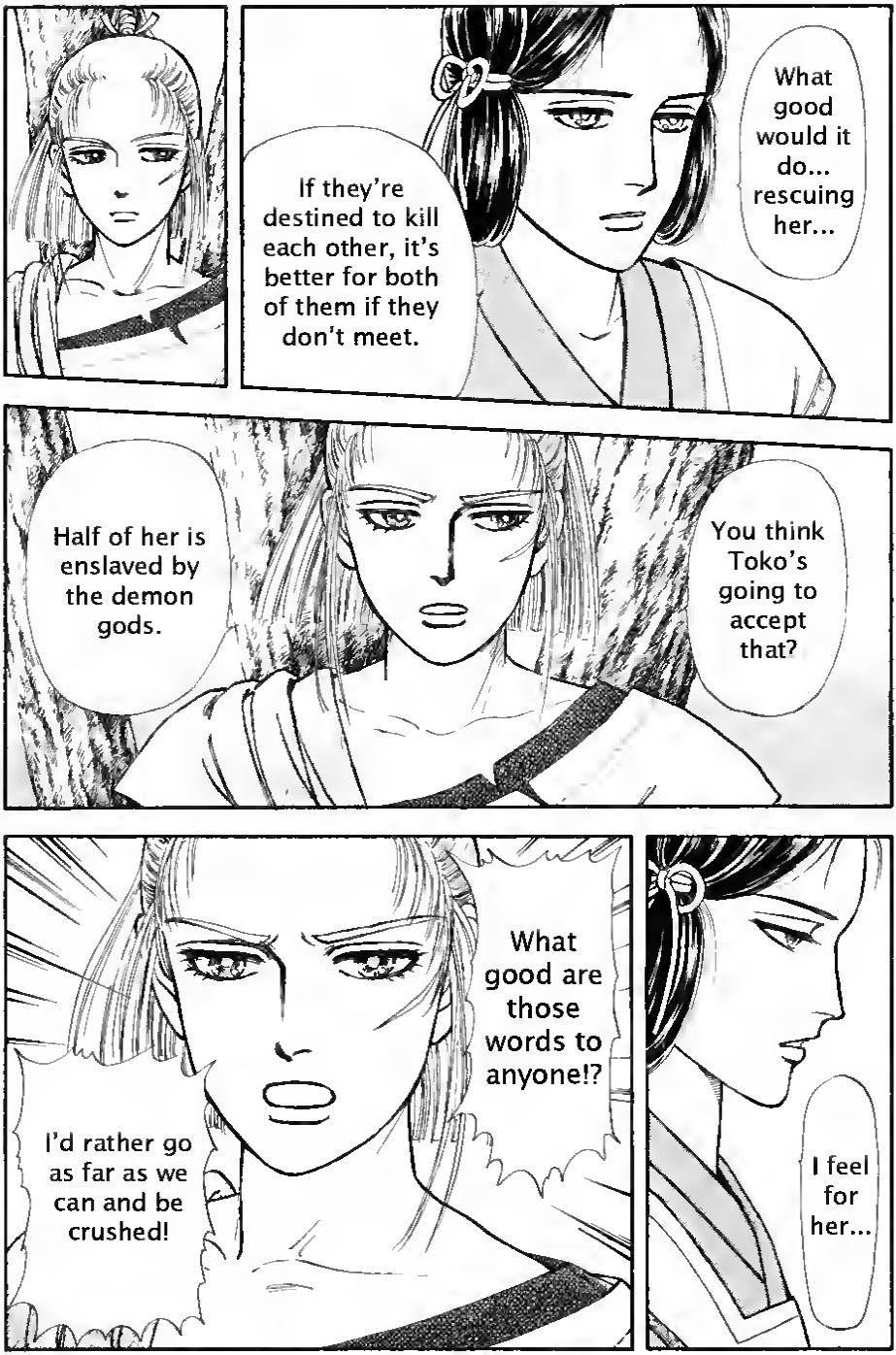

It looks good on you...

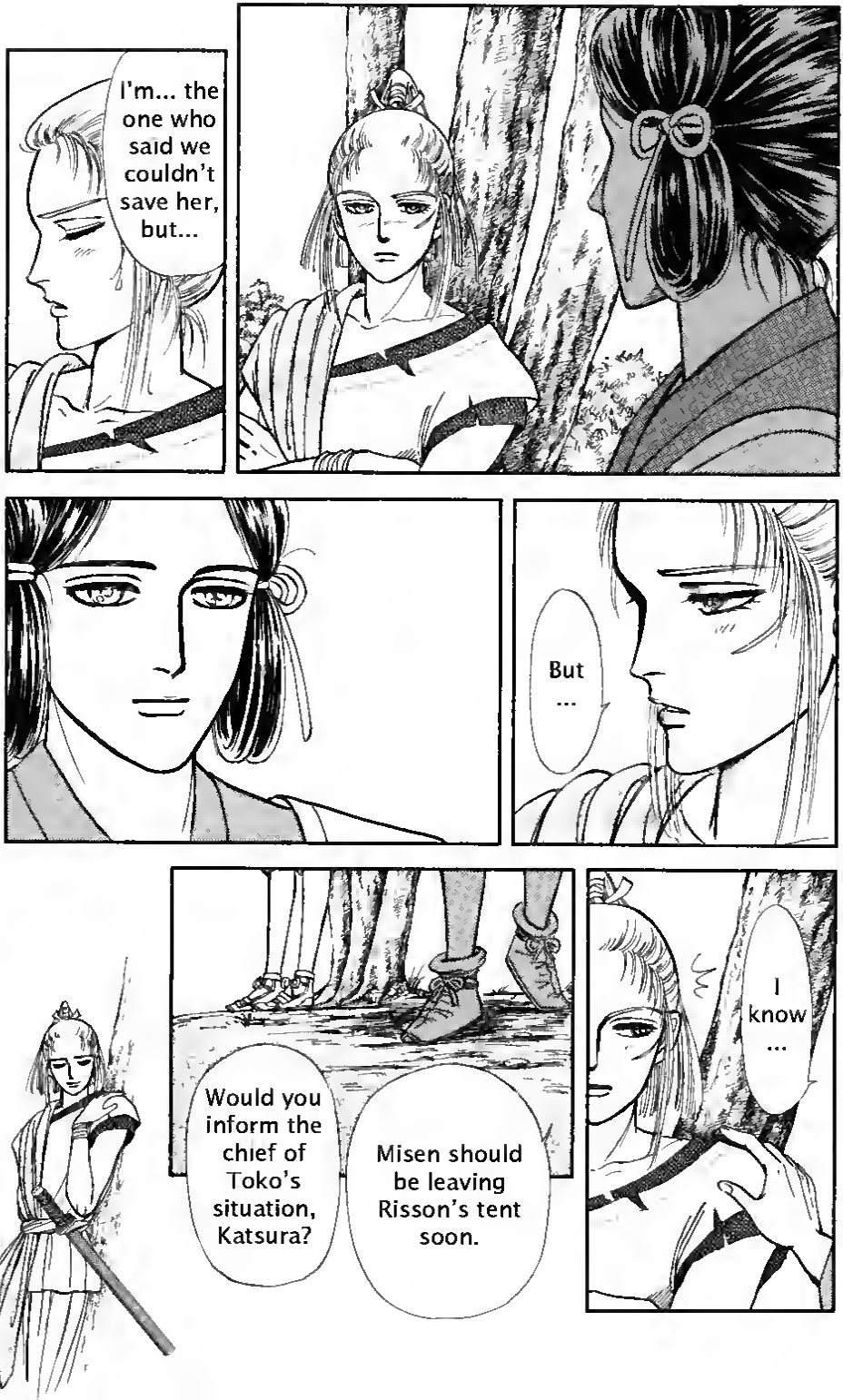
...my dear child.


She's finally calmed down...
We can leave her in Takaya's care for now...
There's nothing we can do but... what should we do?
If what Toko said is true, her twin is in the hands of Kiyu.

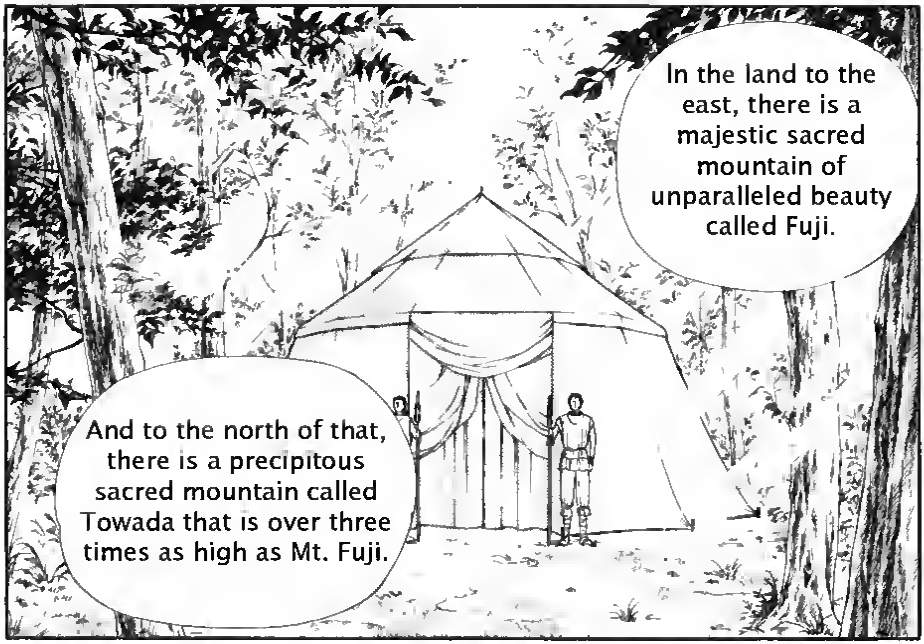

Kiyu is now the ringleader of the demon gods. The warriors under his command are obviously the cream of the crop.
I'll tell you one thing... There's no way we can rescue her.
...

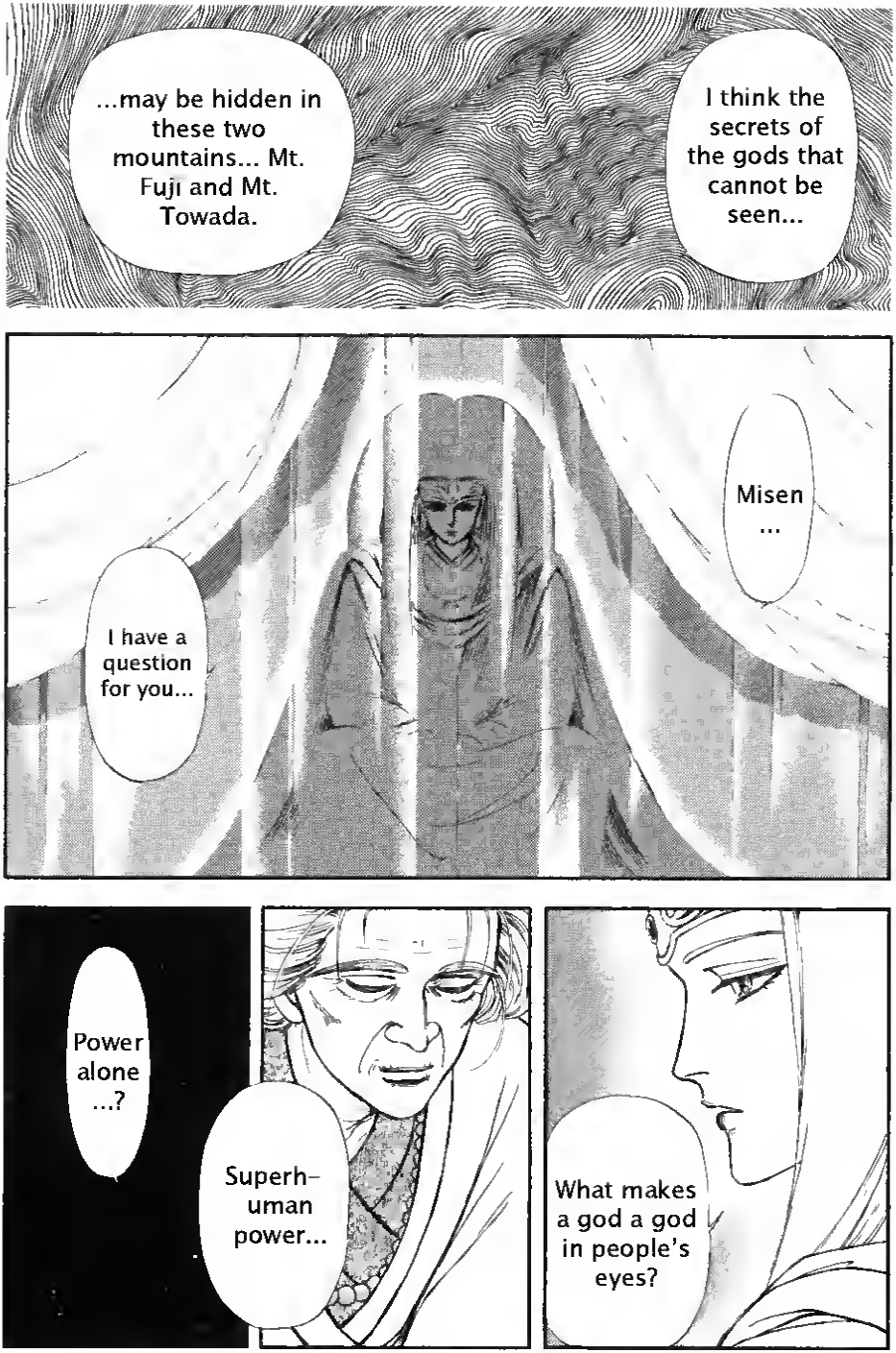

All we've got is rookies that will just get in the way.
As things now stand, we'll be at a clear disadvantage if we run into Kiyu.


What good would it do... rescuing her...
If they're destined to kill each other, it's better for both of them if they don't meet.
You think Toko's going to accept that?
Half of her is enslaved by the demon gods.
What good are those words to anyone!?
I'd rather go as far as we can and be crushed!
I feel for her...


I'm... the one who said we couldn't save her, but...
But ...
I know ...
Misen should be leaving Risson's tent soon.
Would you inform the chief of Toko's situation, Katsura?

It might be a good idea to head to the east and north.


In the land to the east, there is a majestic sacred mountain of unparalleled beauty called Fuji.
And to the north of that, there is a precipitous sacred mountain called Towada that is over three times as high as Mt. Fuji.


...may be hidden in these two mountains... Mt. Fuji and Mt. Towada.
I think the secrets of the gods that cannot be seen...
Misen ...
I have a question for you...
Power alone ...?
Superh- uman power...
What makes a god a god in people's eyes?

Assuming the word "power" includes all its many interpretations, then ultimately...
...yes, your Holiness.
The strong and the weak call on the gods.
...
Can power make people happy?
No, it cannot ...
They seek power because of their strength or weakness.
Then why... do they seek the gods... seek power?

They either don't seek anything ...
And those who are neither strong nor weak?
Such people are rare.
...or search for themselves single mindedly...
...to the point of madness...

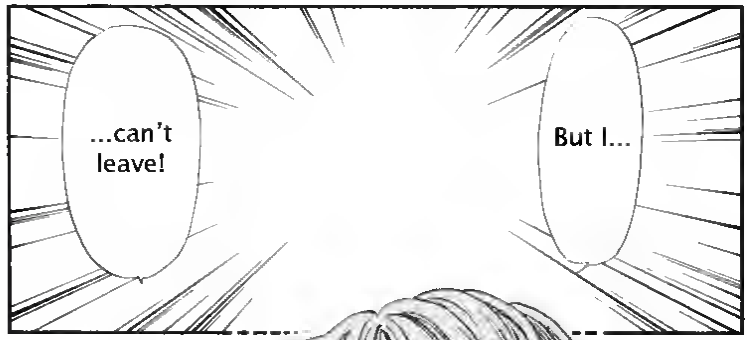
Are you feeling unwell?
Speaking of 'unwell,' sweet Aohiko will take care of anyone... Even a follower of the demon gods.

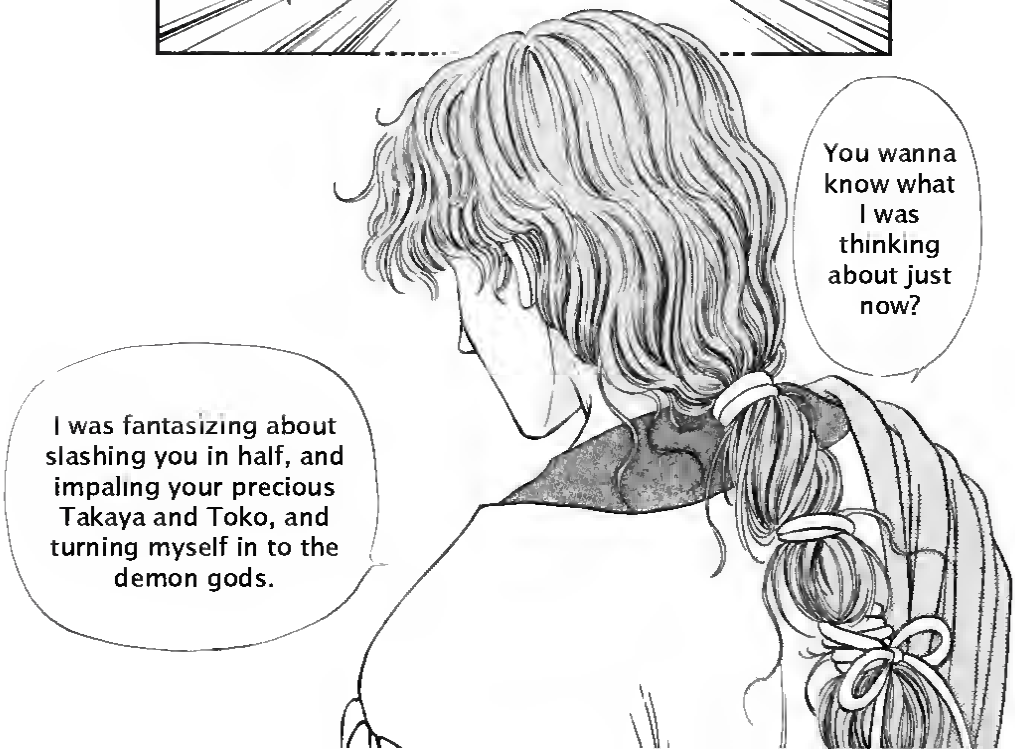
You only care about yourself.
...it's just an act.
But I know ...
You don't do it for them. You do it for yourself.
You're kind to people because it's easier that way.
I just dragged your good-guy reputation through the mud.
What? No objec-tions?

I'm incomplete... I can't side with either the demigods or the demon gods.
I'm not a good person.
There's no need to object.
You're right.
Incomplete!?
It's not like you can't pick a side.
You just won't.
It's exasperating!

If I leave the demigods, I'll fall into the hands of the demon gods before long.
I...
...was raised to be attracted to the aura given off by the demon gods...
...I'm a captive either way...
Whether I follow the demigods or fall to the demon gods...
A... cap- tive...
Cap- tive...

I'm tired of looking at you, a man who only treats Katsura as a friend.
And I'm sick of looking at Katsura, a woman resigned to maintaining a neutral distance.


But I...
...can't leave!


You wanna know what I was thinking about just now?
I was fantasizing about slashing you in half, and impaling your precious Takaya and Toko, and turning myself in to the demon gods.

Get outta here!
Or it'll be more than a fantasy.
It was so much fun I was shaking.
Look at me! Toko...!

I'm gonna rescue her somehow.
Right?
I know you don't know what to do about the twin...
But don't take that attitude with me!
If she's your other half, she might as well be my sister.

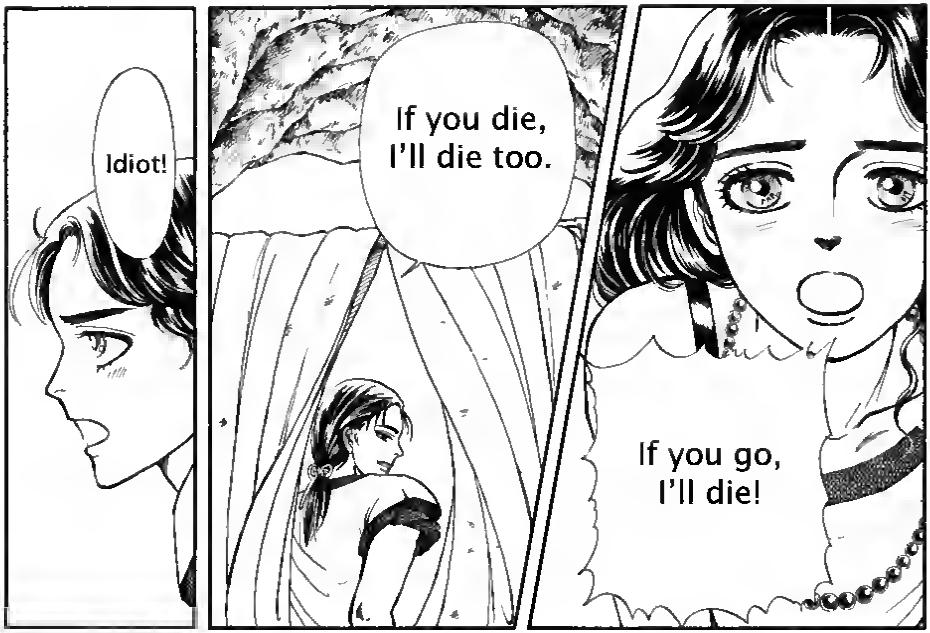
Thank you for every-thing...
Takaya..
What do you mean?
Thank you for every-thing.
Just what I said.
Preten-ding!?
Let's stop pretending to be brother and sister...
What do you mean 'thank you'!?

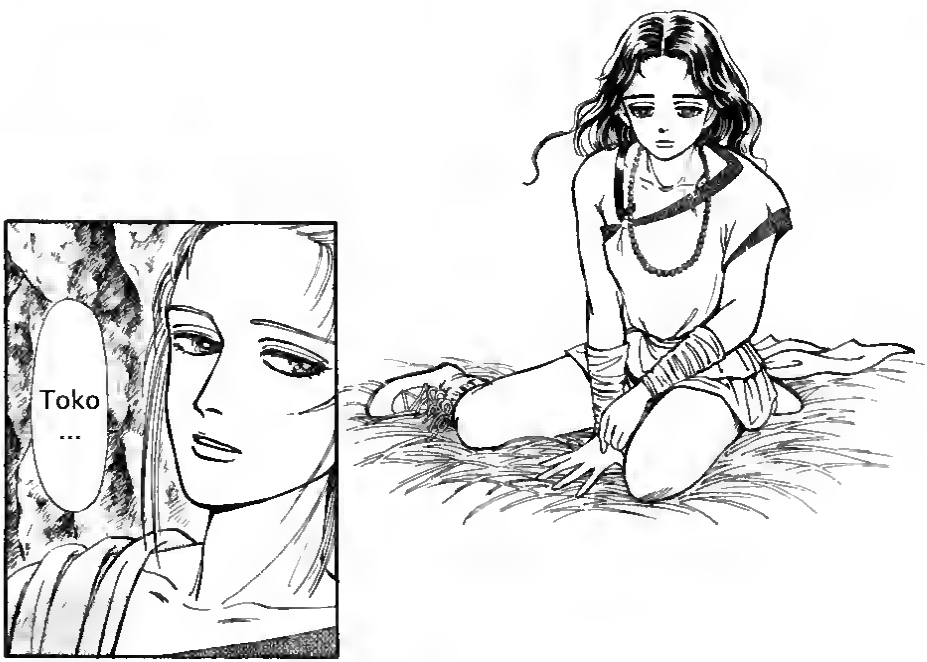
Don't give up now!
I haven't pretended to be your brother once!
Wha-aat!?
You've been pretend-ing?
And I'm still your brother. Now and forever.
...

Toko said she wants to stop "pretending" we're brother and sister.
What's with all the shouting...!?
What happened?
We cleared a space for that girl in our quarters and took her in like we were told, but...
Takaya!
May I speak with you?

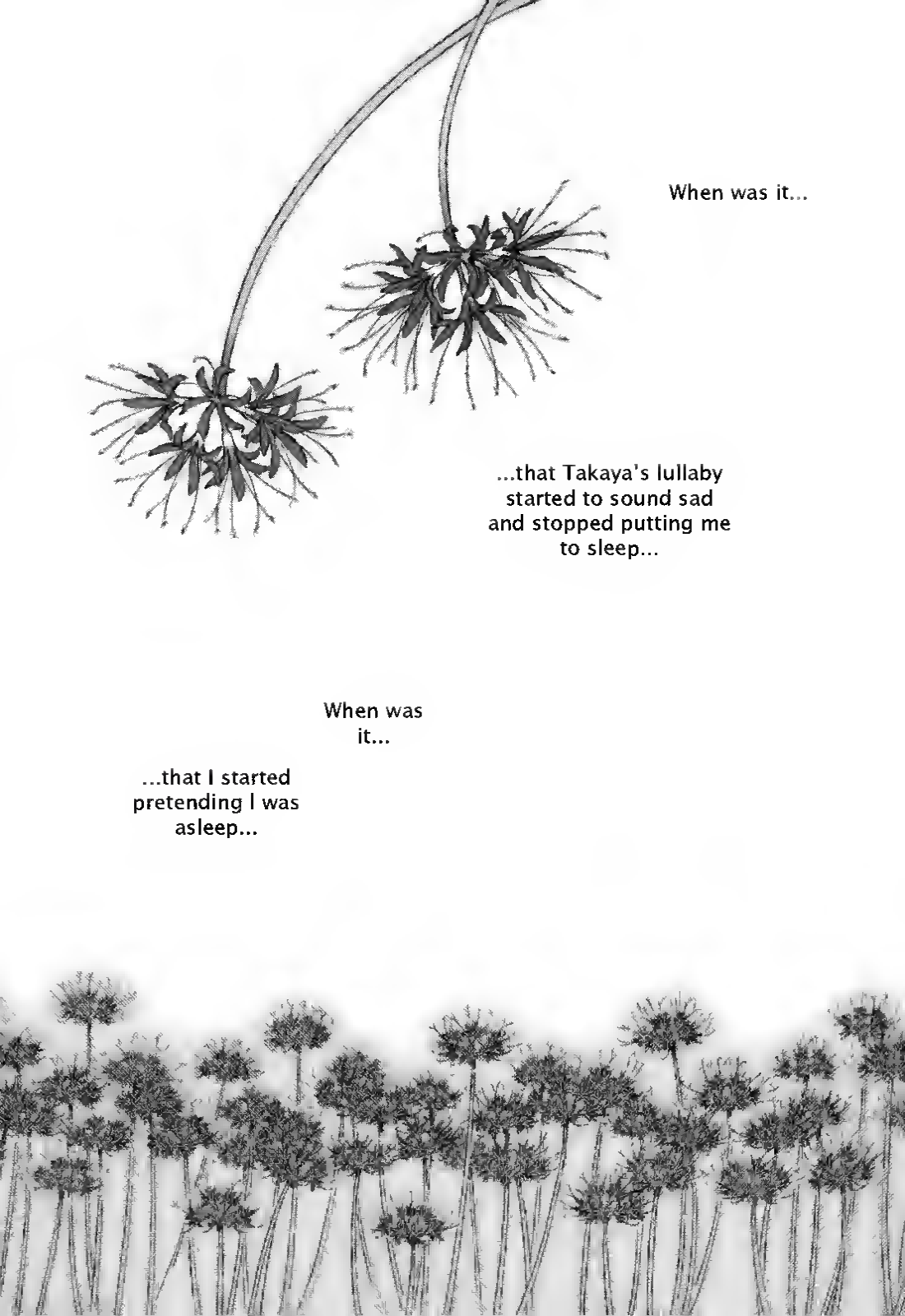
Sorry for the trouble.
I'll go see her.
She seems very sick...
...and says to keep away since it's contagious...
Who's this girl?
One of the girls who's been following me.
Something's wrong with her lungs.
I feel bad for her... I can't just abandon her.
I know you're not the type to leave things be when you're told to, but...
...if it's tuberculosis, that's a problem.
Even if you don't mind, you could spread the disease to everyone...
That sounds like what it is.
I'll be careful.

It's sad, right?
Even I can see it's too late. She won't last long.
Such a lovely girl...
It's that girl with long hair, isn't it...
The one watching you from behind a tree...
My head hurts, and my stomach hurts...
I'm not feeling well either!
Don't go!
Don't throw a tantrum.
You look like a baby.
... to go ...
I don't want you...


Idiot!
If you die, I'll die too.
If you go, I'll die!


Toko ...

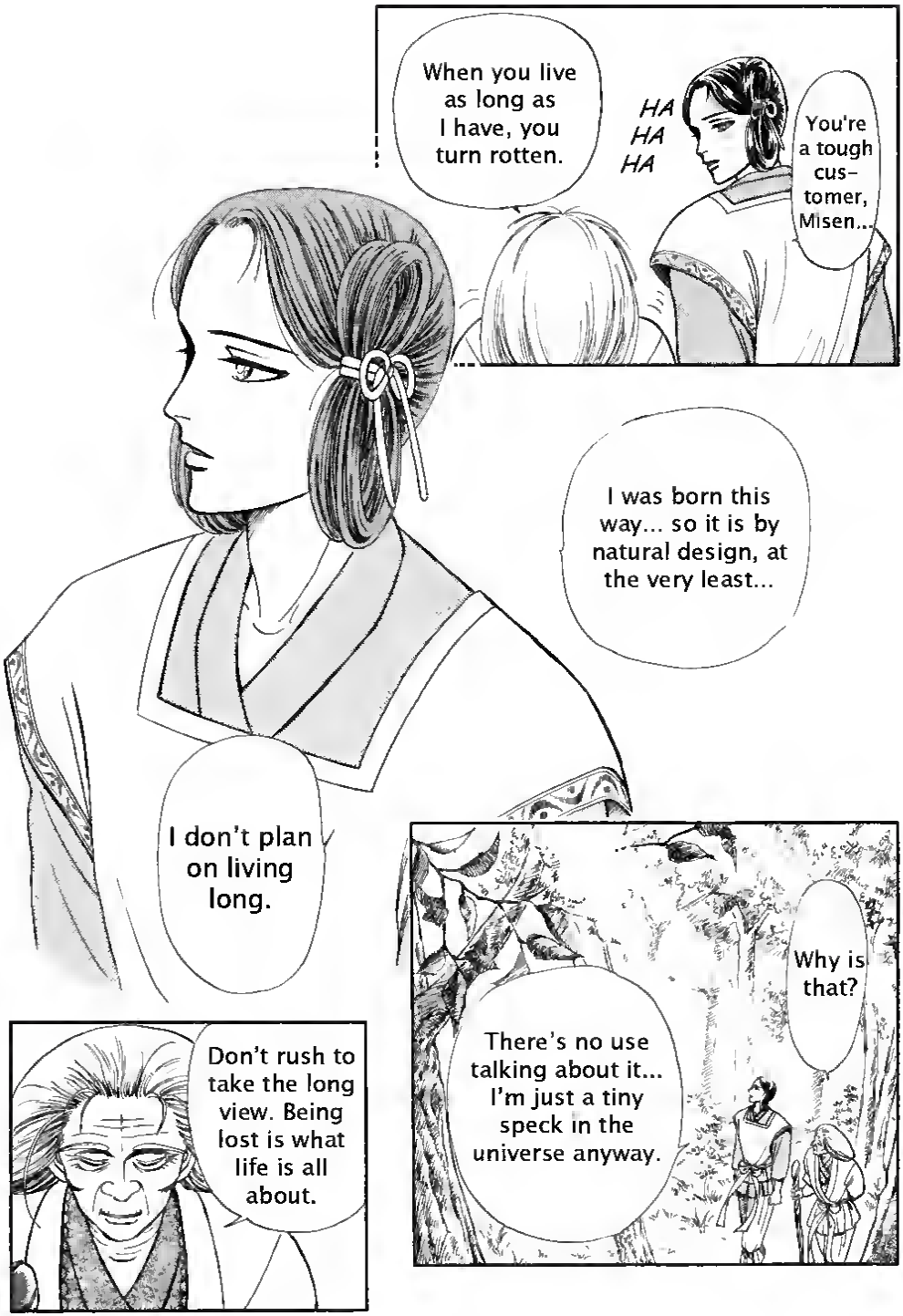
You don't have to say anything
It's the furthest thing from his mind...
...you pretending to be his sister.
I'm an expert at pretend-ing...
Let's just say... all men are idiots.
HEHE
Something tells me you've figured me out too.
A-C HOO


When was it...
...that Takaya's lullaby started to sound sad and stopped putting me to sleep...
When was it...
...that I started pretending I was asleep...

Don't get up. Lie down.
How calculating.
SQUEEZE
DRIP
... I ...
If you catch it...
The disease scared the other girls off.
SPLAT
Don't worry.
I scare off diseases. They steer clear of me.

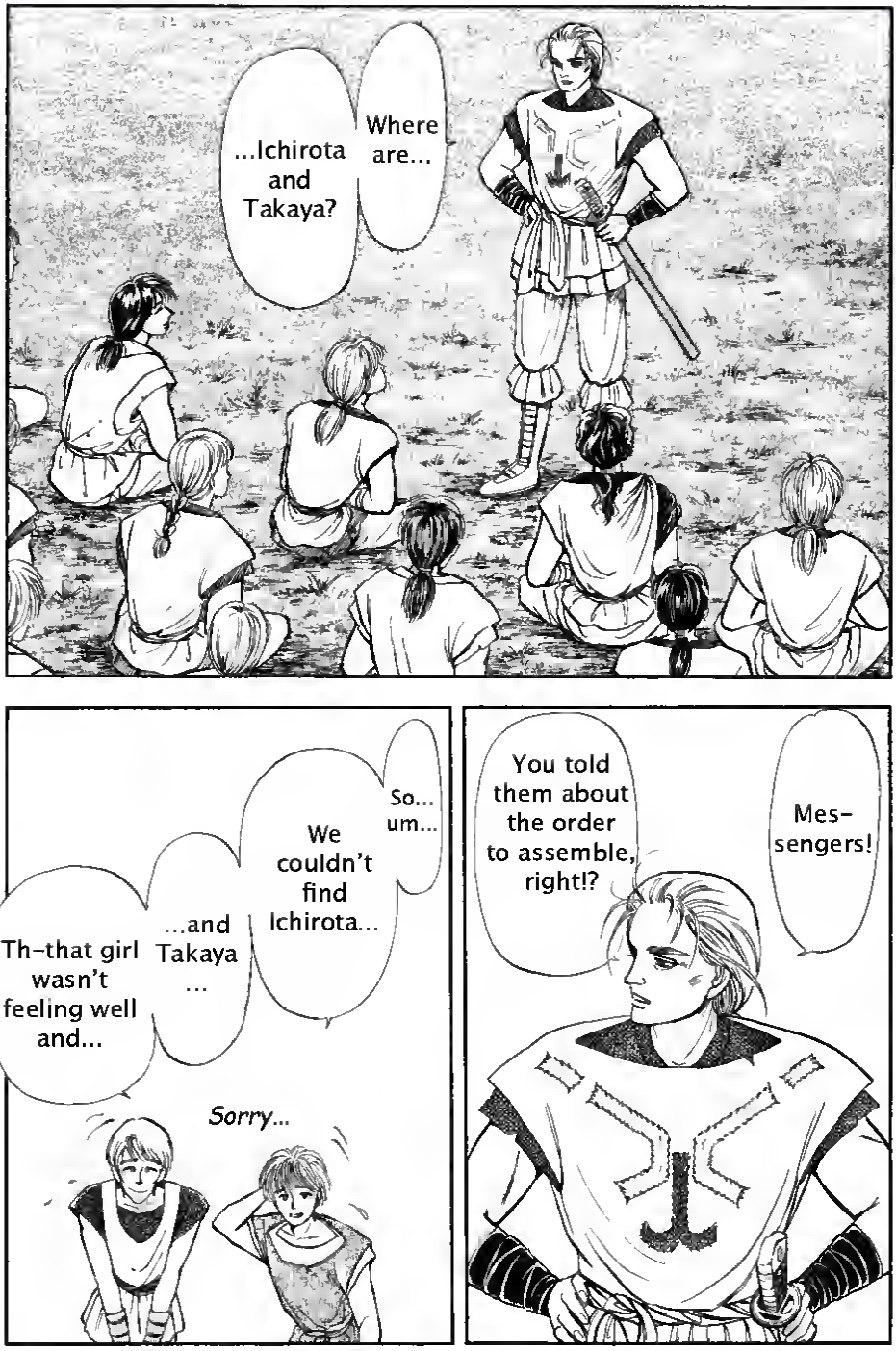
I'll stay here until you fall asleep, so...
...close your eyes and get some rest.
If the fever doesn't go down, you won't be able to eat.
It's like a dream ...
I can't sleep.
If you're not here when I wake up, I'll think it was a dream for sure.
And I want to look at you as long as possible.
What a difficult patient...
Sorry.

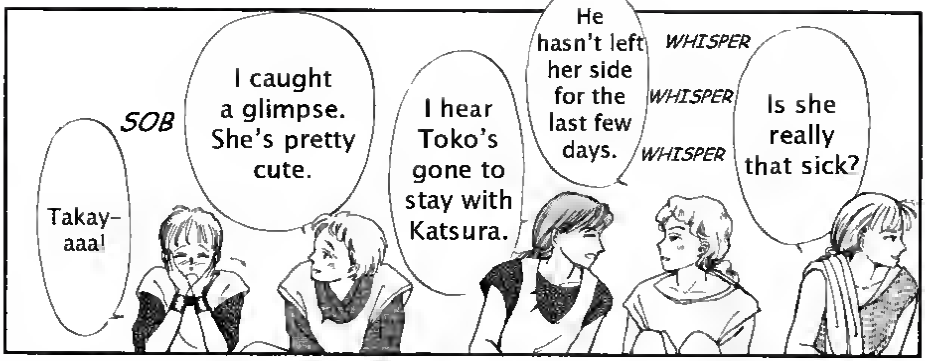
He directed me to join your group...
...but at my age, I doubt I could even make it to Mt. Fuji...
...so he agreed to let me pass on my knowledge to you instead.
Aohi-ko ...
Oh sorry!
I'm the one who should apologize for the trouble.
So I'll trouble you for a few more days.
You're a curious soul, Aohiko. There's something different about you.
Is that what drew Risson to you?
Or was it your beautiful appear-ance?


When you live as long as I have, you turn rotten.
HA HA HA
You're a tough customer, Misen...
I was born this way... so it is by natural design, at the very least...
I don't plan on living long.
Why is that?
There's no use talking about it... I'm just a tiny speck in the universe anyway.
Don't rush to take the long view. Being lost is what life is all about.

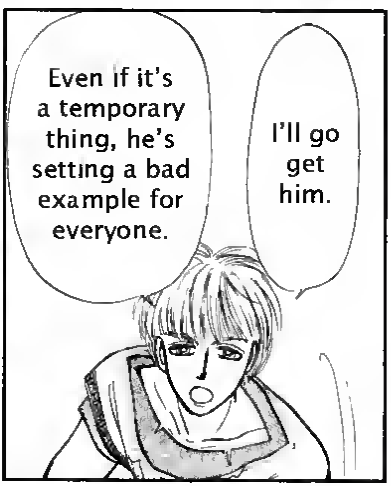
The heavens and earth are perfect and beautiful...

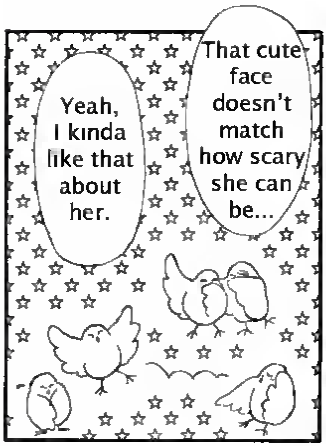
Why are humans alone imperfect... and unhappy...?

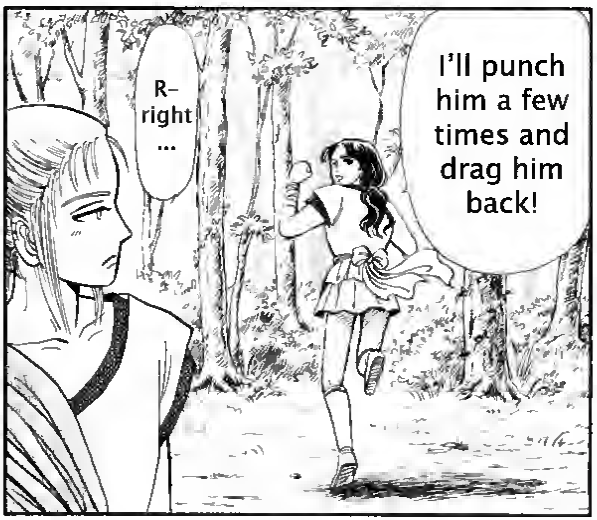

Where are...
...Ichirota and Takaya?
Mes-sengers!
You told them about the order to assemble, right!?
So... um...
We couldn't find Ichirota...
...and Takaya ...
Th-that girl wasn't feeling well and...
Sorry...


Takay-aaa!
SOB
I caught a glimpse. She's pretty cute.
I hear Toko's gone to stay with Katsura.
He hasn't left her side for the last few days.
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
Is she really that sick?

I'll do it!


Even if it's a temporary thing, he's setting a bad example for everyone.
I'll go get him.

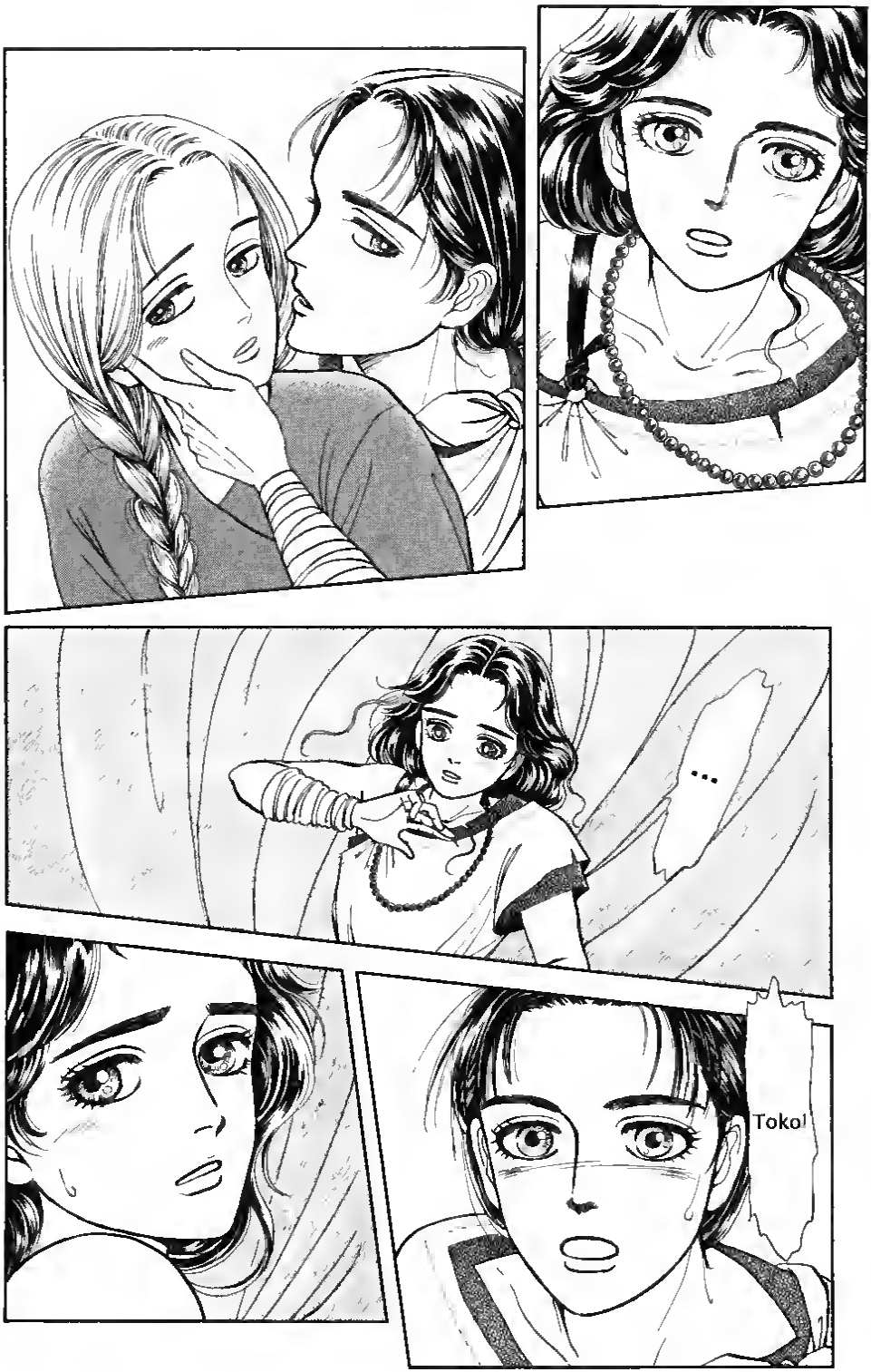

That cute face doesn't match how scary she can be...
Yeah, I kinda like that about her.


R-right ...
I'll punch him a few times and drag him back!

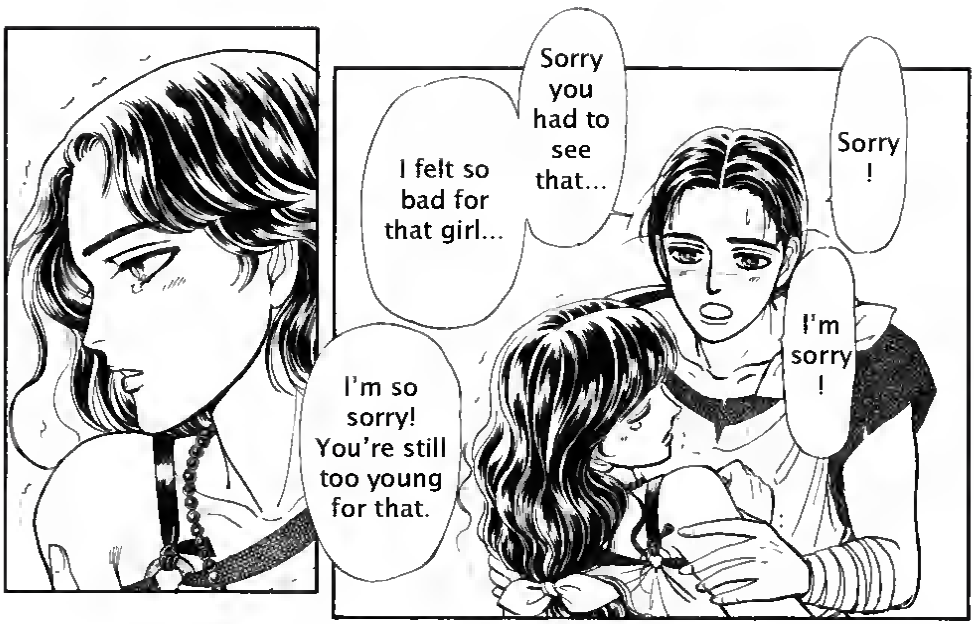
If we'd met a little sooner, I may have been able to save her with a mantra...
COUGH
COUGH
COUGH
COUGH
COUGH
ごほっ
ごほっ
ごほっ
I'm sorry ...
Is that better ?
Thank you...
If rubbing your back helps, let me rub it a bit more.

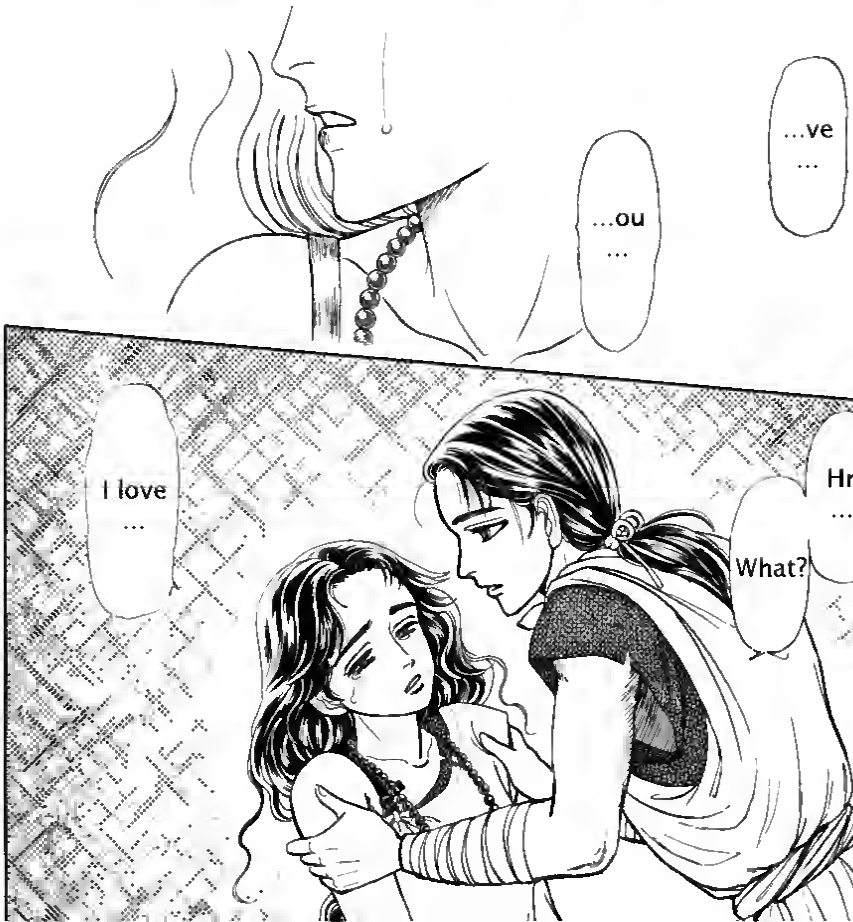
I never
...human touch could feel so loving...
No one has touched me...
...since I came down with this...
You're exaggerating, Kiriko.
No, I'm not.
I'm not exaggerating...
I really haven't been...
I was shunned by everyone in my tribe because the disease was contagious. I've been living all alone.
... touched by anyone.

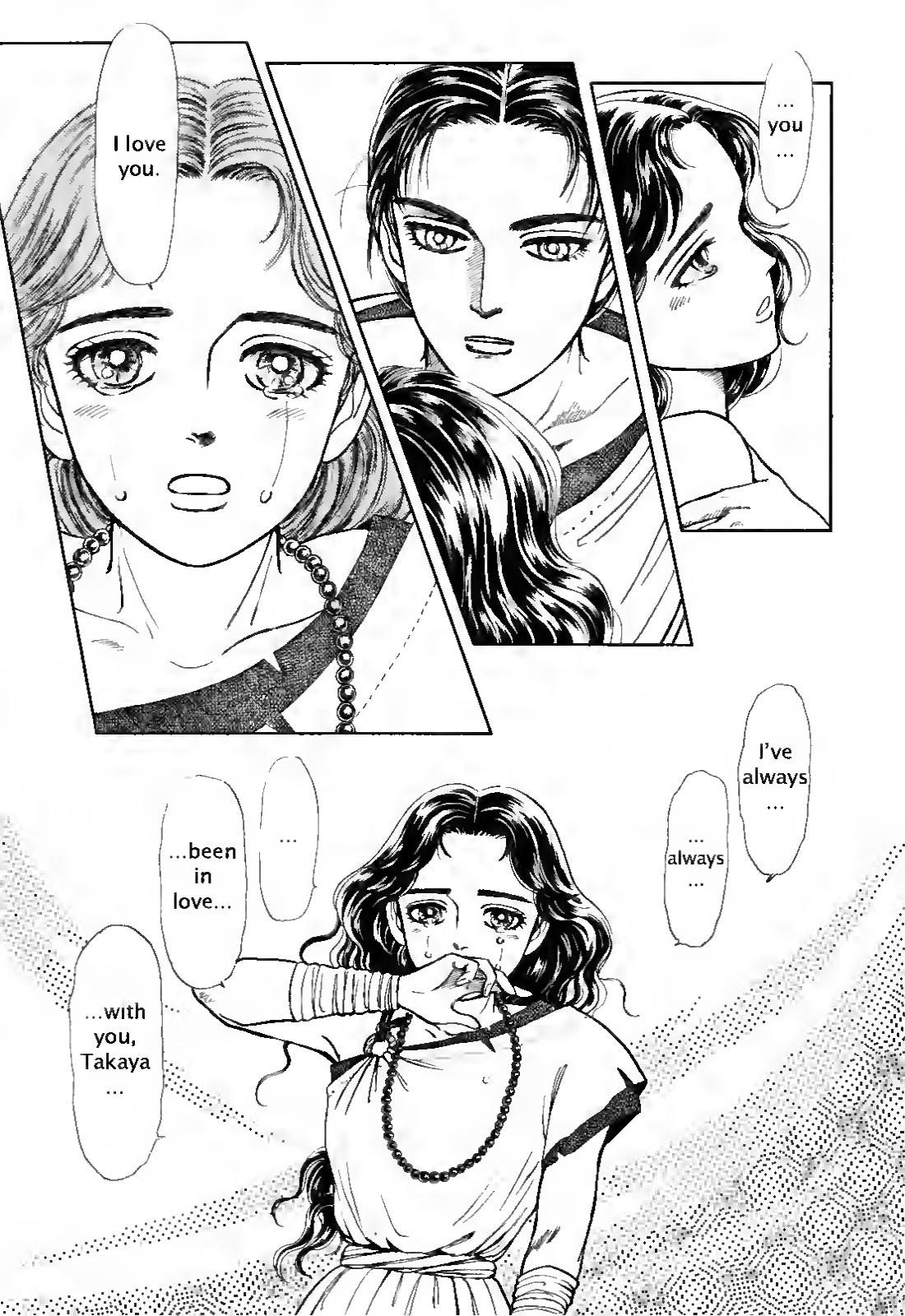
Don't ...
You'll catch ...
Takaya!


...
Tokol

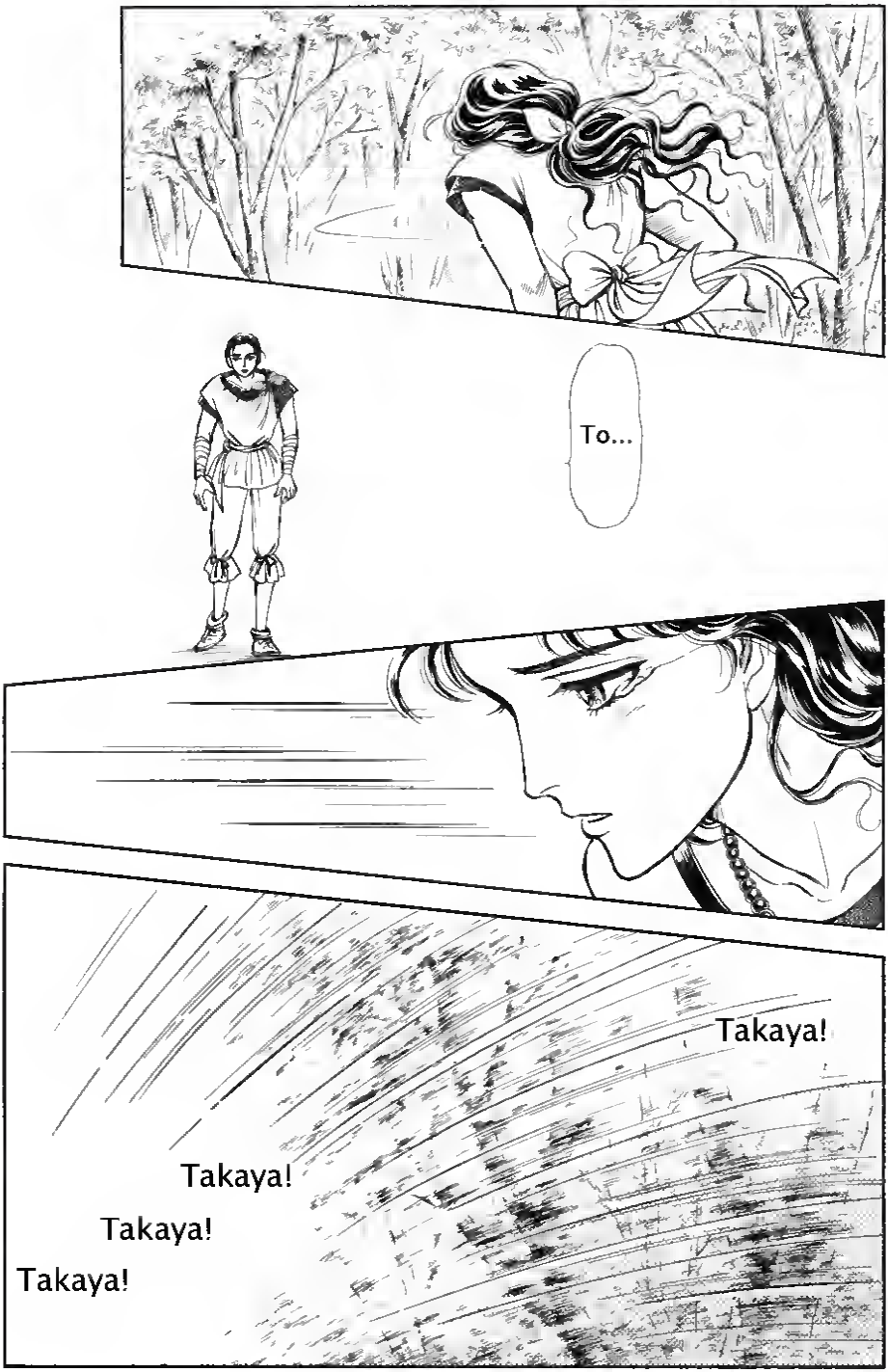
BURST
Ah ...
Toko!
NOO!
Toko!
Toko!
No!
Noo!
Toko!


I'm so sorry! You're still too young for that.
I felt so bad for that girl...
Sorry you had to see that...
Sorry !
I'm sorry !


...ve ...
...ou ...
I love ...
What?
Hm ...?


I love you.
... you ...
I've always ...
... always ...
... ...been in love...
...with you, Takaya ...

To...
ko...
I'm
your...
You're
not my
brother!


To...
Takaya!
Takaya!
Takaya!
Takaya!

Toko...
SLAM
TRIP
Ow...

Stupid tree!
It hurts!
It hurts!
I wish every-thing would just go away!
Wither up and die!
She must be crying...
SHOO

I can't go hold her even though she's crying...

I don't need anyone else if I've got you.

I like you the best, Takaya!

When was it...

...that she stopped talking like that?

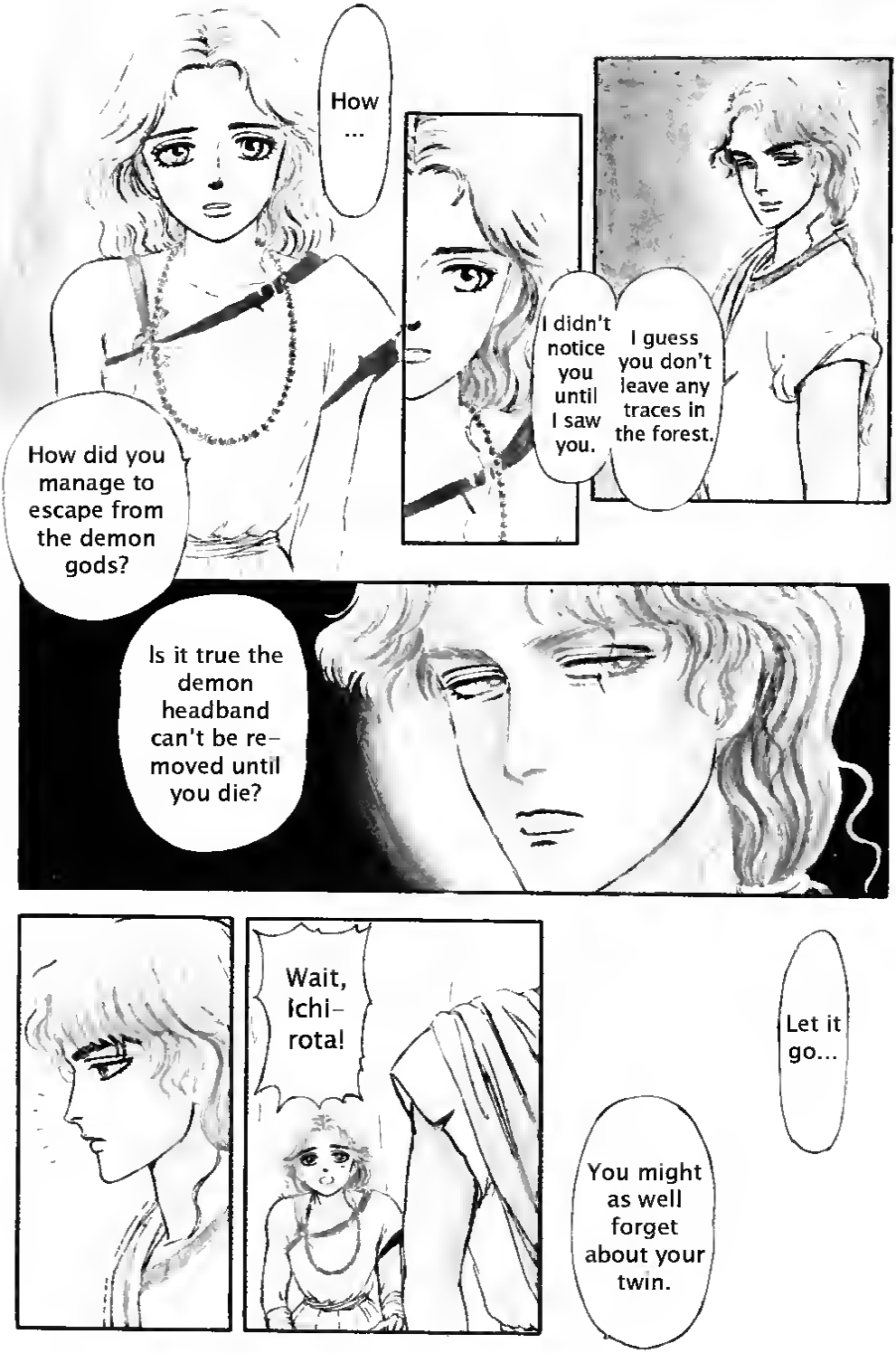
When was it...

...that she stopped rushing into my arms and depending on me...?

WHOO
WHOO
WHOO...

RUSTLE
Sor
...ry
....
I'm
sorry
...
I'm
sorry
...

I wonder if she feels sad when I do.
There are times when I've felt sad for no reason
...

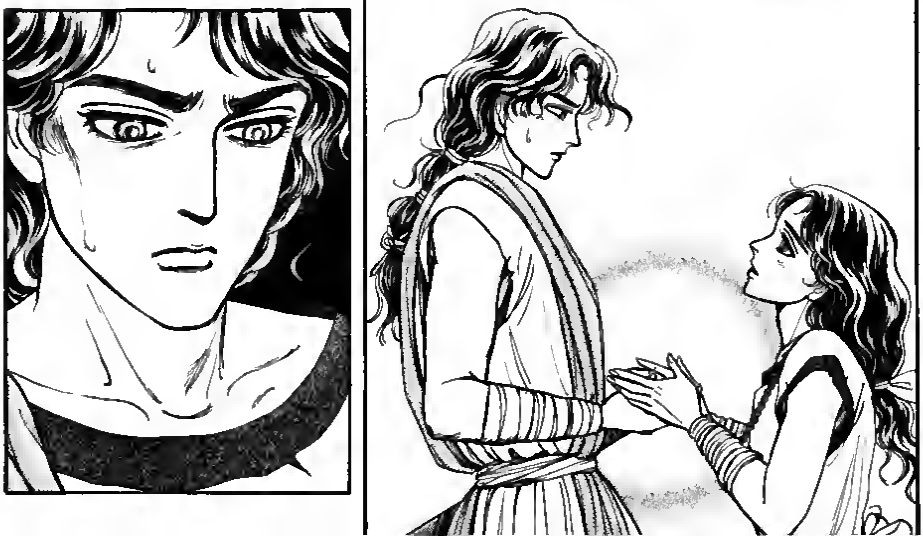

How ...
I didn't notice you until I saw you.
I guess you don't leave any traces in the forest.
How did you manage to escape from the demon gods?
Is it true the demon headband can't be removed until you die?
Wait, Ichirota!
Let it go...
You might as well forget about your twin.

PEEP
PEEP
PEEP
PEEEP
PEEP
PEEP PEEP
PEEP-PEEP
In your hand...
Life fades away.
Enjoy it...

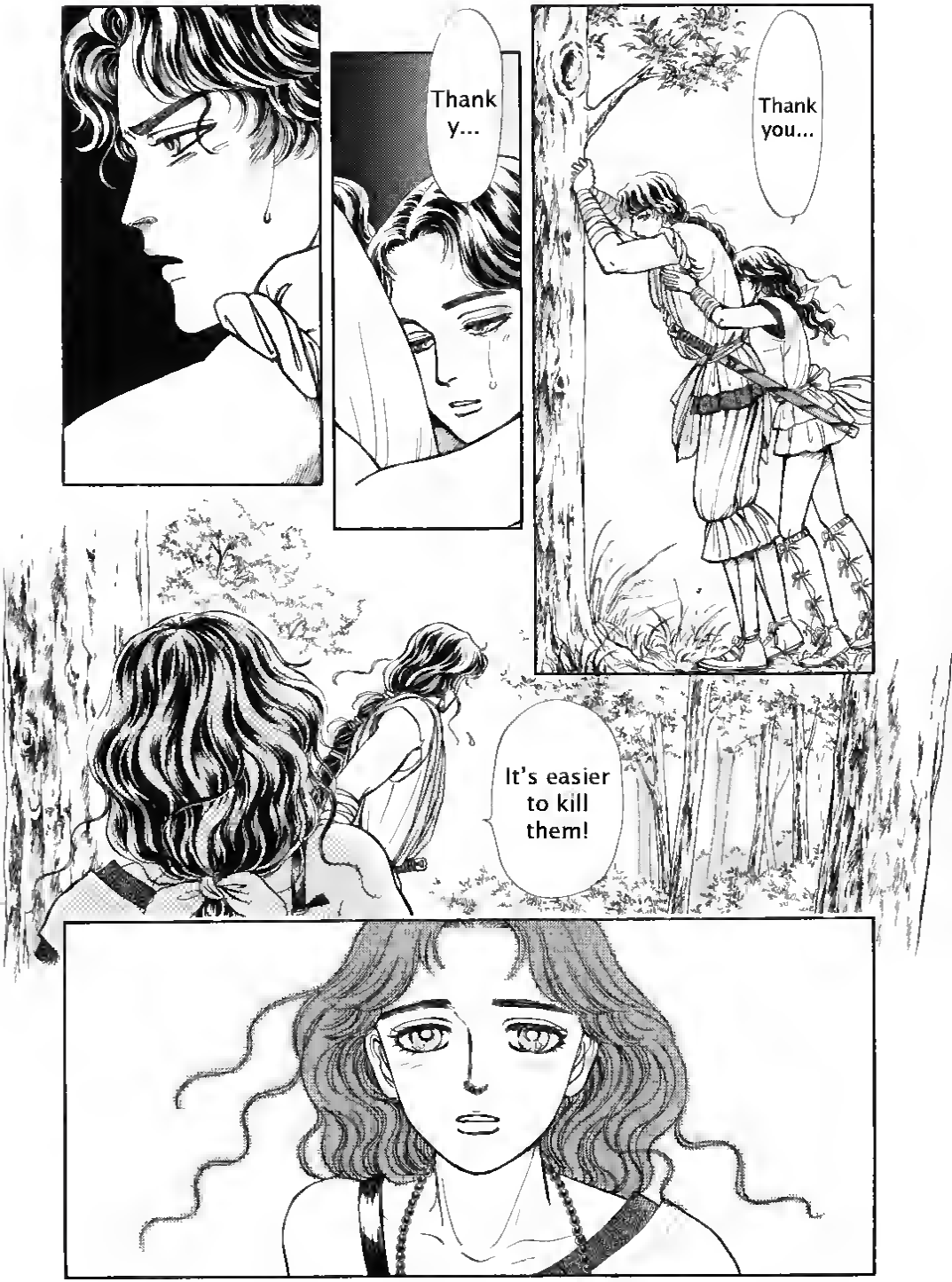
Enjoy that feeling!
PEEP PEEP PEEP
I can't reach it.
Ichi-rota!

It's okay …
It's okay …
Please …
Please help me!

PEEP-PEEP-PEEP
PEEP PEEP
Here …



And he will guide us there after confirming the location?
So... Risson is first going on his own to look for the sacred mountain in the east.
Ichirota ...
We would waste several days if we did it on foot.
Yes!
SIGH
?!


Thank y...
Thank you...
It's easier to kill them!

Finally. There he is...
Will you...
Did yau guys fight!? Look at that lang face...
What happened to Toko? She left to get you.
Will you look for Toko?
I can't do it.

Toko
...
What are you going to do?
I don't know. That's why I'm talking to you.
But would you look for her first?
First let's talk about your feelings.
What do you mean my feelings!?
What do you expect me to do!?

That's right ...
Takaya raised Toko.
You can't just tell him to calm down.
Calm down.
...ch— changed her diapers ...
...slept by her side ...
...carried her...
Gave her piggy-back rides ...
I raised her with these hands.
That must be why she didn't say anything until now.
Toko must have been well aware of Takaya's feelings.
How can I feel that way about her!?

Your first love is the deepest...
...the most spe-cial...
Even if she's still a child...
You can't just tell her to stop feeling that way.
And her feelings grew the longer she remained silent.
But...
But... she's... my sister...
She's my life.
Toko is ador-able.

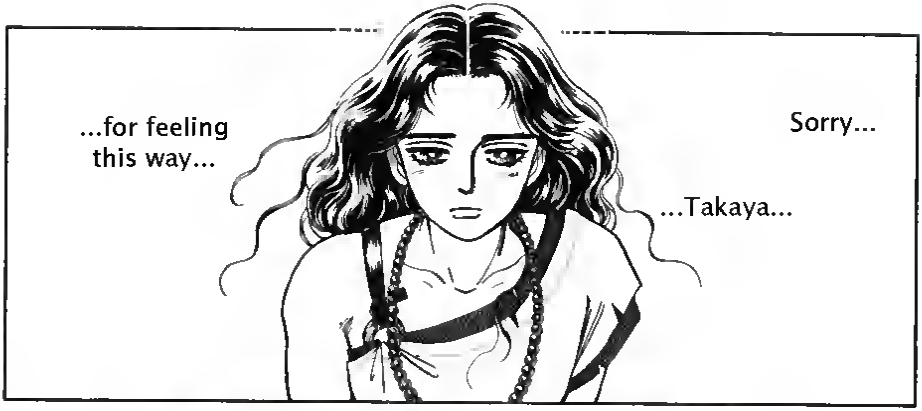
Fine!
Toko can stay at my place for now.

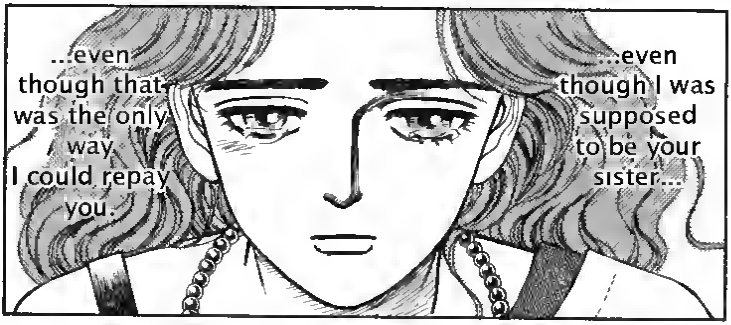
I know!
I'm useless in these situations
Thanks

Toko...

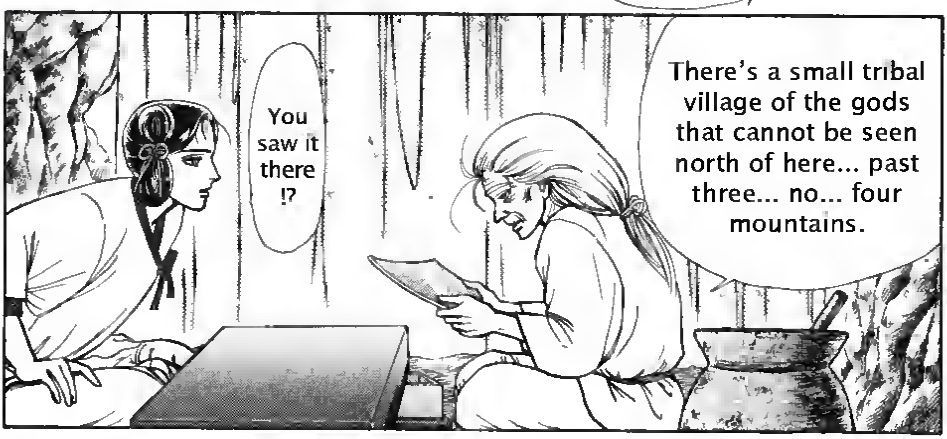
He departed in the middle of the night!
Risson has departed!
BUZZZ...
I was hoping I could finally see his form again.
What're you complaining about! I've been waiting a year and a half!
I still haven't seen his face or form.

Be on your guard at all times!
Attention, everyone! We no longer have Risson's shield to protect us!
Yes sir!
...Takaya...
...always finds me...
Wherever I am...
I know... I understand...
Toko!

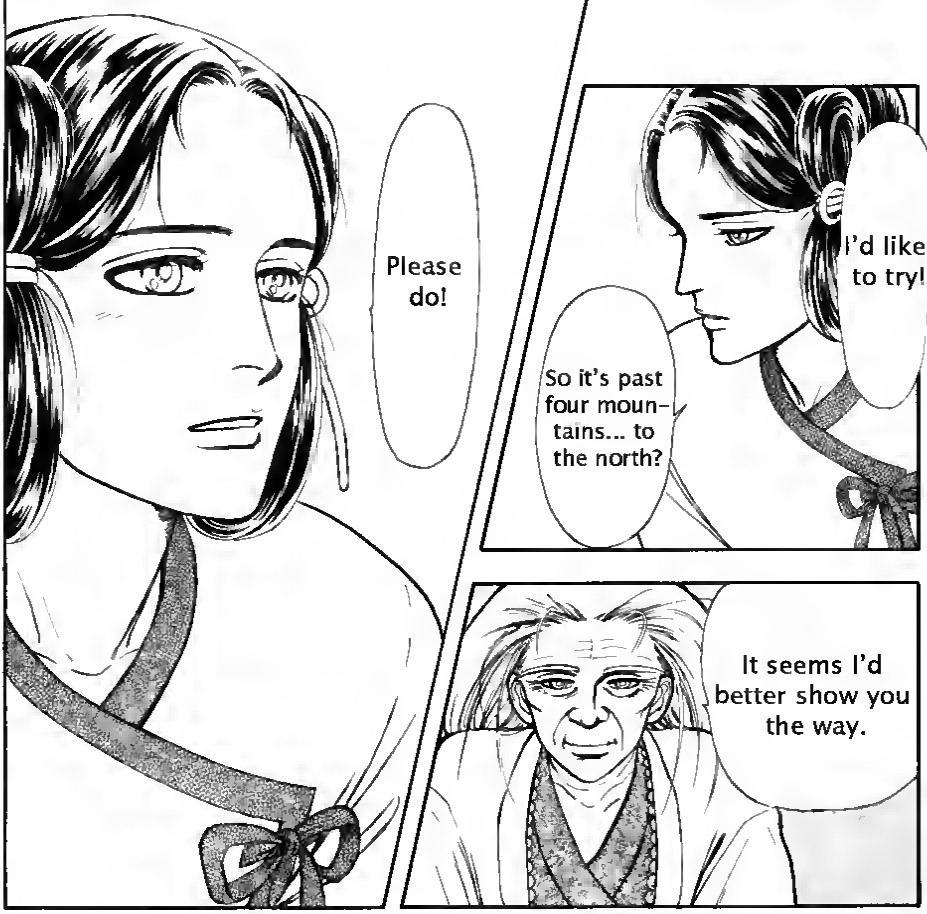

...for feeling this way...
Sorry...
...Takaya...

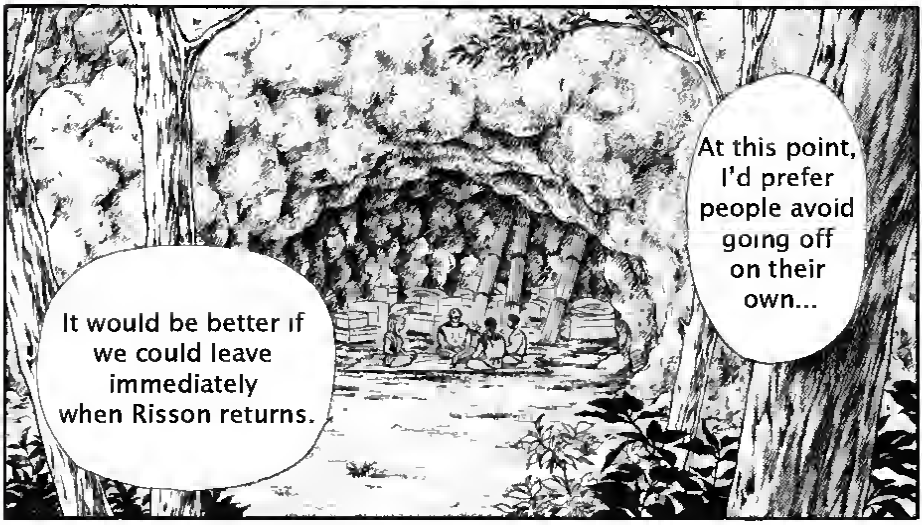

...even though that was the only way I could repay you.
...even though I was supposed to be your sister...

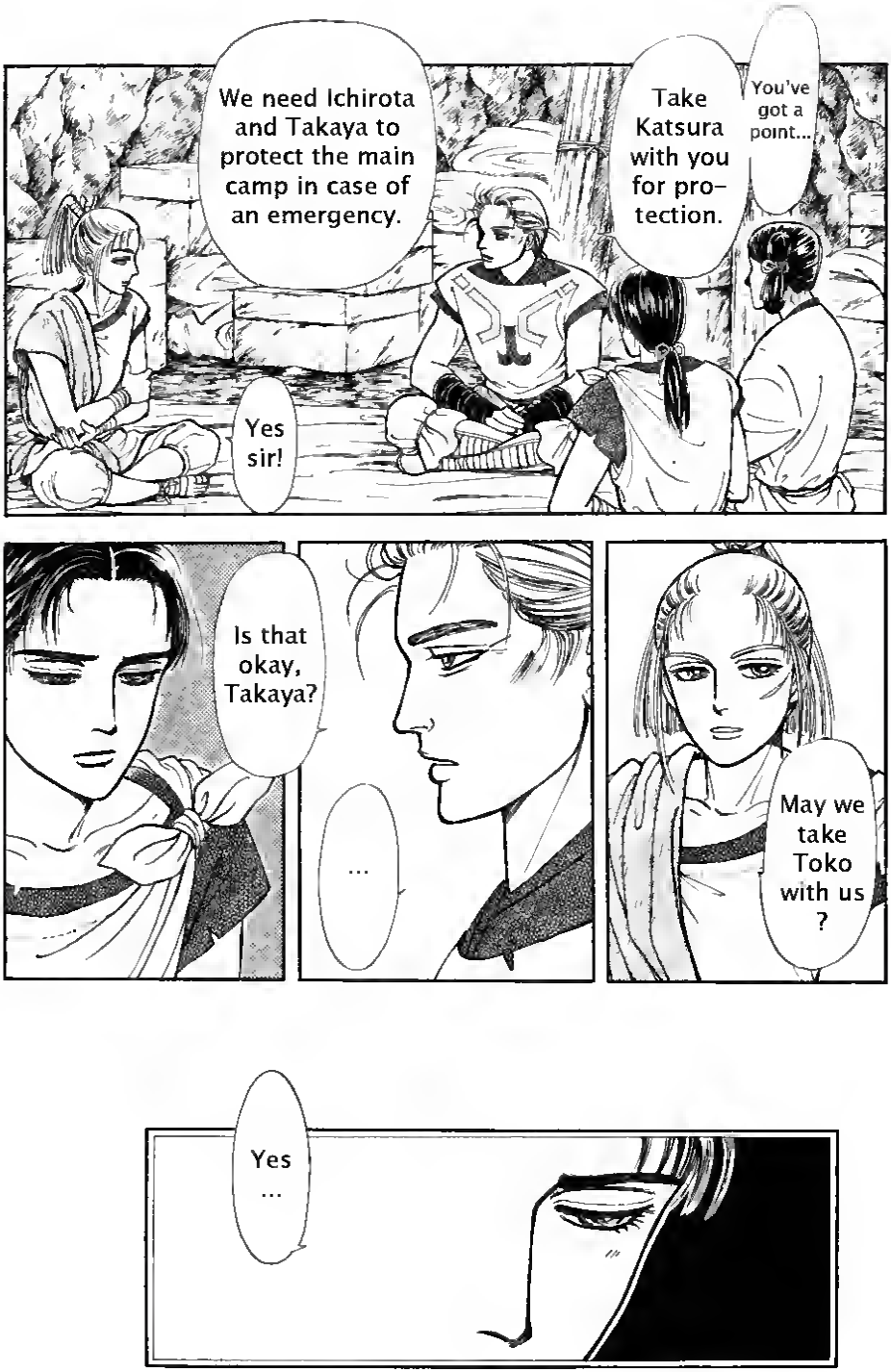
Oh! I've seen a mirror just like this one before.


You saw it there !?
There's a small tribal village of the gods that cannot be seen north of here... past three... no... four mountains.

Take a look at this.
The strange shape has been weighing on my mind for many years.
So it's true then...
...So I've been wondering if this could be a part of a larger mirror.
It probably only makes sense once you fit them all together.
Interesting. Eight pieces into one...
Seven with this shape and a round one in the center...
Hmm ...


Please do!
I'd like to try!
So it's past four mountains... to the north?
It seems I'd better show you the way.


It would be better if we could leave immediately when Risson returns.
At this point, I'd prefer people avoid going off on their own...


We need Ichirota and Takaya to protect the main camp in case of an emergency.
Yes sir!
Take Katsura with you for protection.
You've got a point...
Is that okay, Takaya?
...
May we take Toko with us ?
Yes ...

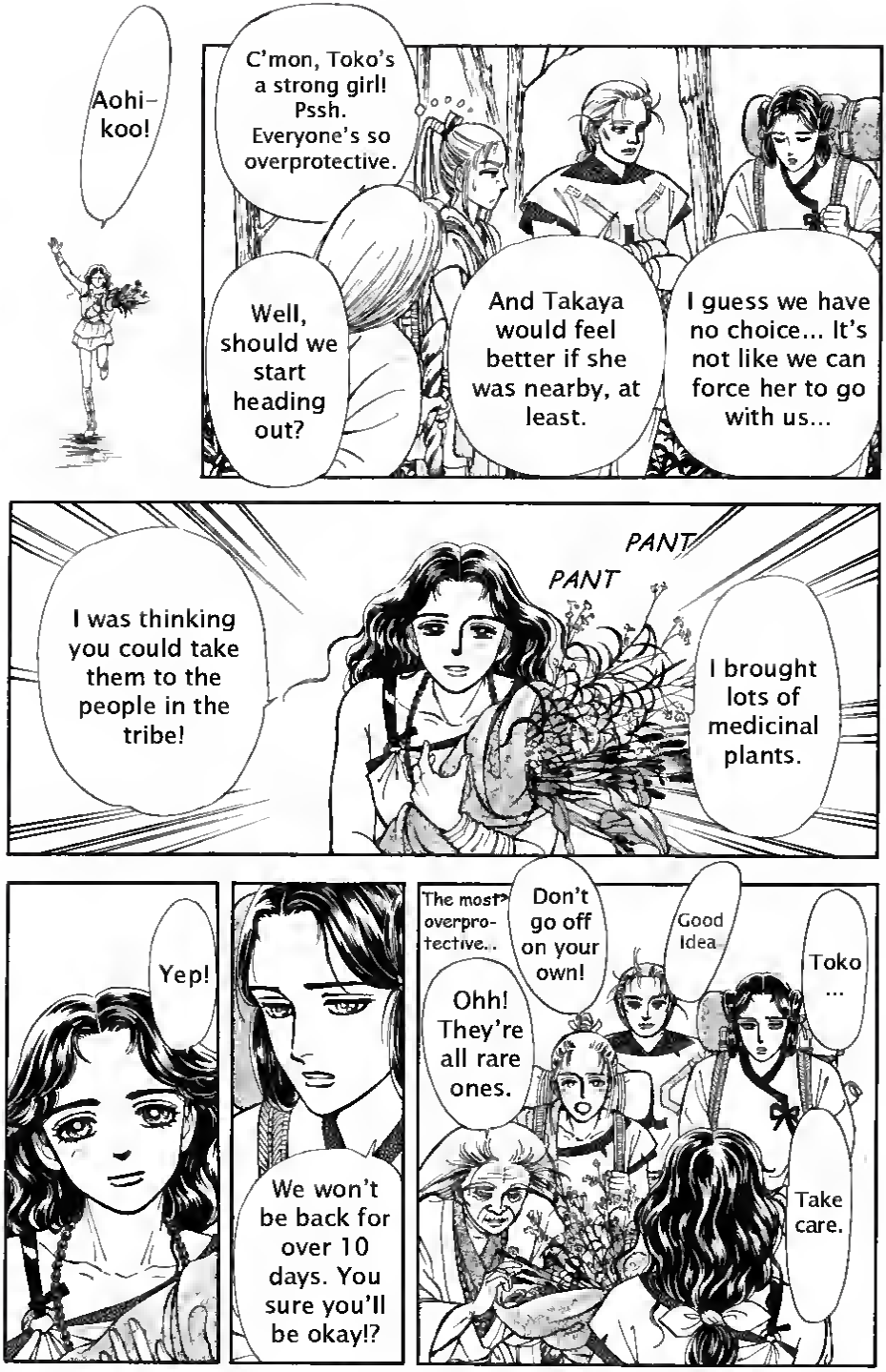
Toko ...
Have you been fighting with Takaya!?
What hap-pened?
It's the first time you two have fought, right?
Was it about that girl?
Takaya's a nice guy, so he had to do something.
It sounds like her condition is really serious.
In any case... you're his sister...
I think it's time you looked around you...
Koma's blushing!
Shut up!

Right.
Thanks ...
Everybody loves you.
When you feel down, Toko, we all lose heart.
That girl has died!
Hey !
She really is cute.
Wh— what a cutie!
Died!?
Died quietly in her sleep as she lay in Takaya's arms!
PANT
PANT
PANT
She died... just now!

...didn't bring that poor girl... a single flower.
I...
I'm...
...such a stupid child...

I want to be alone...
You're not going with us?
What?
I just want to try living on my own.
If you're going back to Takaya's, that's a different story...!
You think I can just leave you on your own!?
Good luck with what...!?
B-but ...
But good luck!
No...
You're not worried about getting in the way, are you?
Toko!

I want to be alone...
She insisted on it this morning.
Yes! I told him!
Does Takaya know?
She's a stubborn kid...
Children grow when they're alone.
I feel very uneasy about leaving her, though.
I trained him, so you can be sure of his skill.
...and staying in separate quarters, Takaya will keep an eye on her... both openly and secretly.
Even if she's alone...


Aohi-koo!
C'mon, Toko's a strong girl! Pssh. Everyone's so overprotective.
Well, should we start heading out?
And Takaya would feel better if she was nearby, at least.
I guess we have no choice... It's not like we can force her to go with us...
PANT
PANT
I was thinking you could take them to the people in the tribe!
I brought lots of medicinal plants.
Yep!
We won't be back for over 10 days. You sure you'll be okay!?
The most overprotective...
Don't go off on your own!
Good Idea
Toko ...
Ohh! They're all rare ones.
Take care.

Thought I'd find you here.
It's the best vantage point.

How many times have I tried to kill you under the pretext of training...
...just to see Aohiko cry?

Are you gonna punch me if I say...
...Katsura's face is all lit up?

But you would've felt bad if I'd really died, right?
Sev-eral.
It's like you were born to fight.
You're no ordinary man.
I've never said this...
I'm quite fond of you.
Don't let Toko meet her twin.
It will only hurt them both.
...but... thank you.

My first night alone...
It's so dark...
and quiet...

...lullaby ...!
Takaya's ...
What can you see when you close your eyes?
Ha-yo ne-yo-ne
Ha-yo ne-yo-ne
You can't fall asleep with laughter or tears
"The red flowers of a faraway landThe white waves of an ocean never seen"

Ha-yo
ne-yo-ne
Ha-yo
ne-yo-ne
We'll meet again
in the land of
dreams.
Where are you!?

Toko!?

Toko!?

Where are you!?

I'm here,Brother!

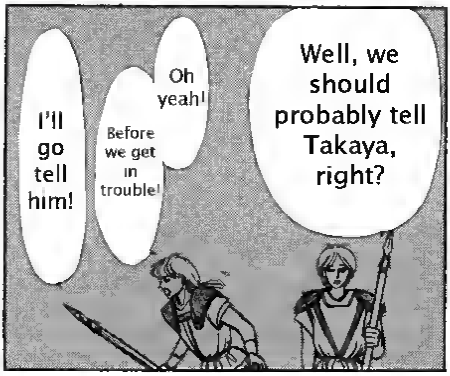
Brother!

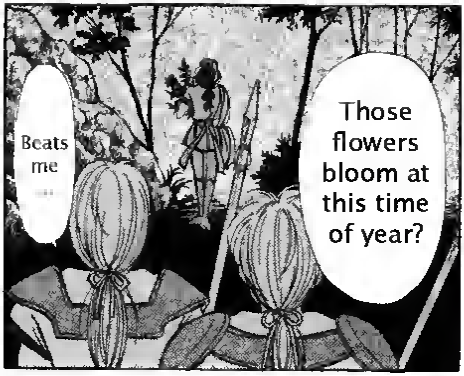
Aren't these pretty!?

Toko will die...
GASP
Why did I...
...have that dream again... now...?
...
BADUMP
Toko!
BADUMP
BADUMP
BADUMP

T-Toko I?
Whoa!
Hey!
Don't tell me you fell asleep on your watch!
Where are you going with those flowers...?
What are you doing at this hour!?
But, this late at night?
Actually I couldn't sleep.
But I woke up!
It's not safe. Wait until it's light.
I'm visiting the grave of the girl who just died...

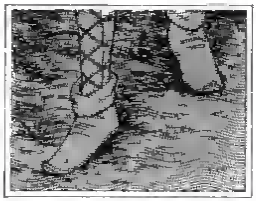
Th-
that's
true,
but...
And I'm
stronger
than you
guys!
The sky is
already
lighting up
in the east.


I'll
go
tell
him!
Before
we get
in
trouble!
Oh
yeah!
Well, we
should
probably tell
Takaya,
right?


Beats
me
...
Those
flowers
bloom at
this time
of year?

...starting with
my behavior!
I'm...
...going to turn over
a new leaf today...

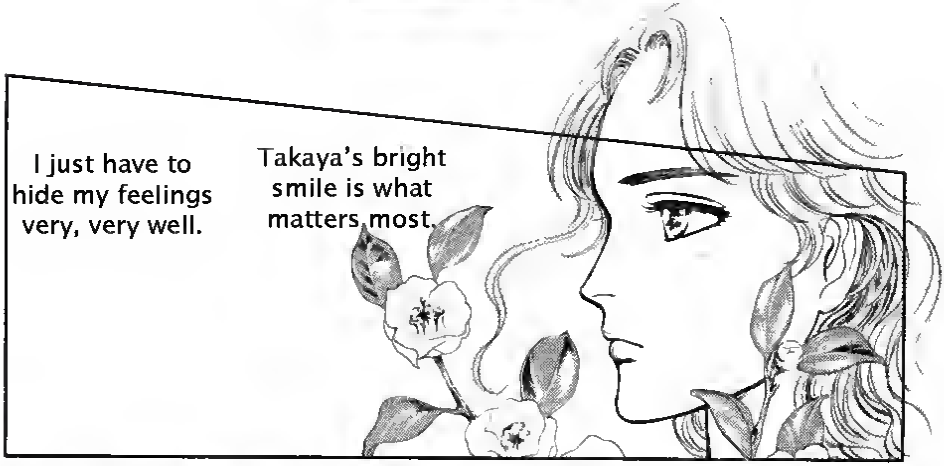
I'll smile and say "Sorry" and "I'm your sister"...

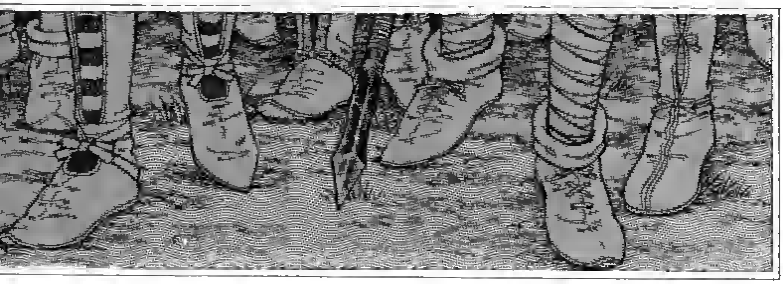


I'll go to Takaya's place in the first rays of the sun and tell him straight out...

I just have to hide my feelings very, very well.

Takaya's bright smile is what matters most.

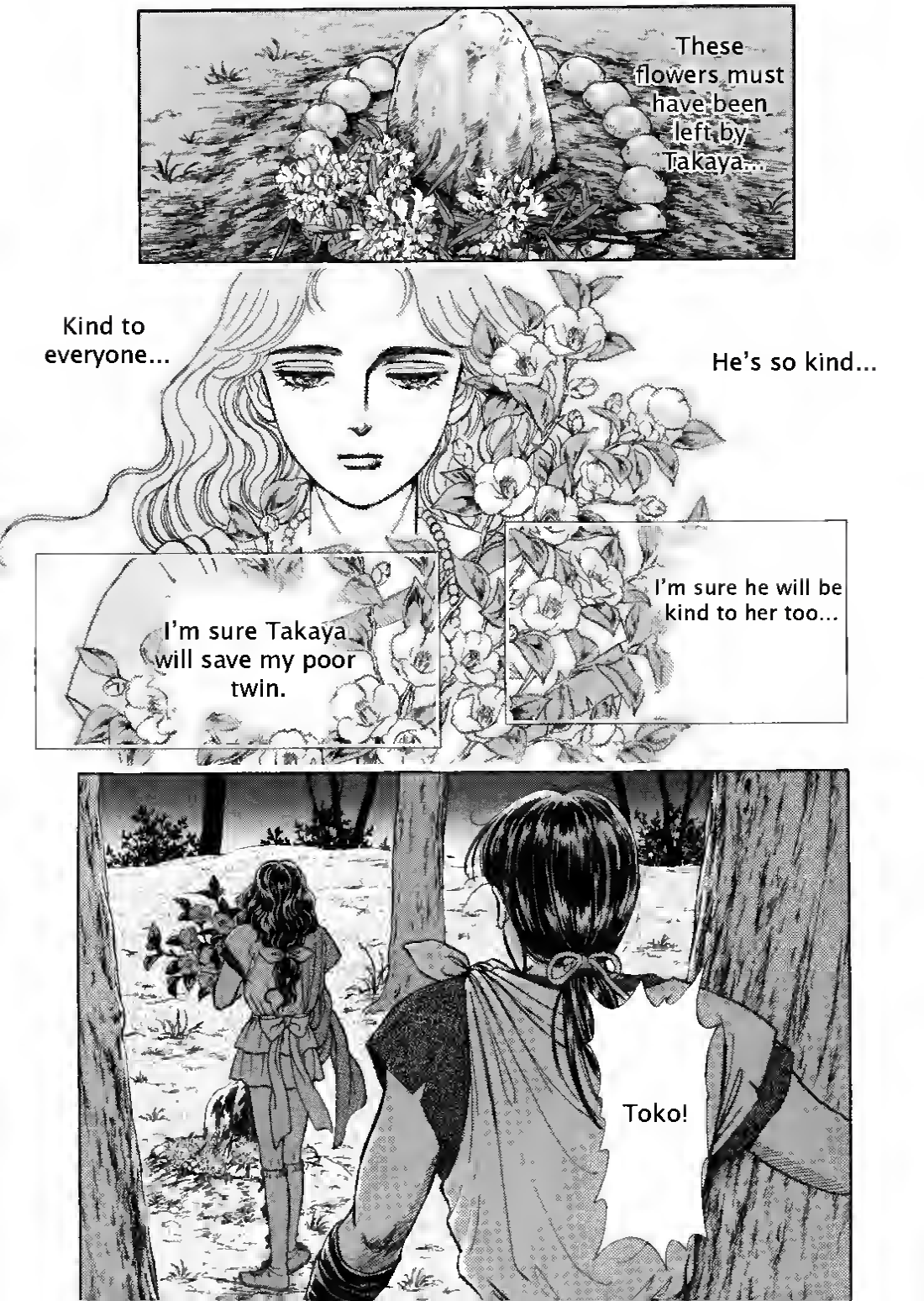


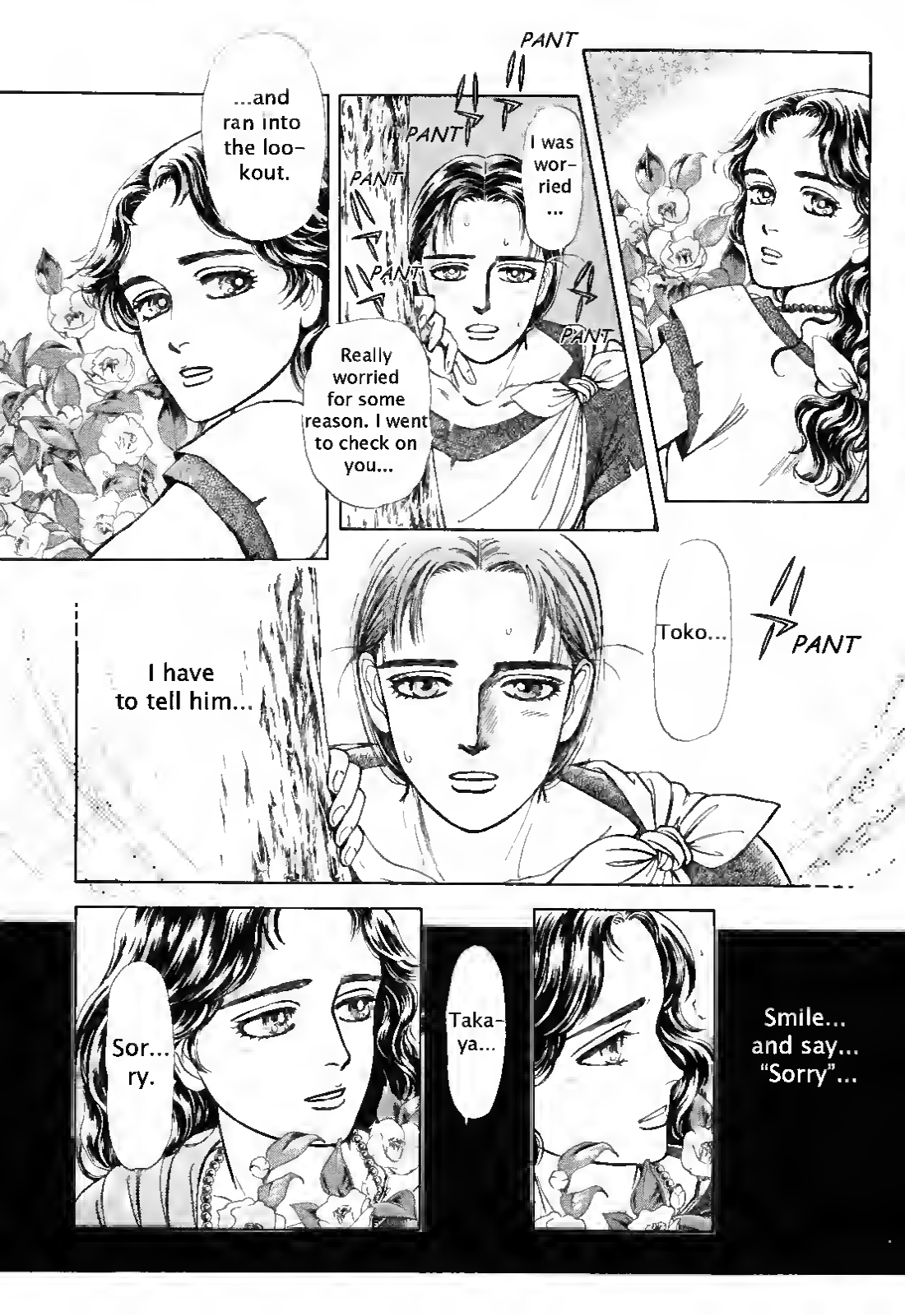


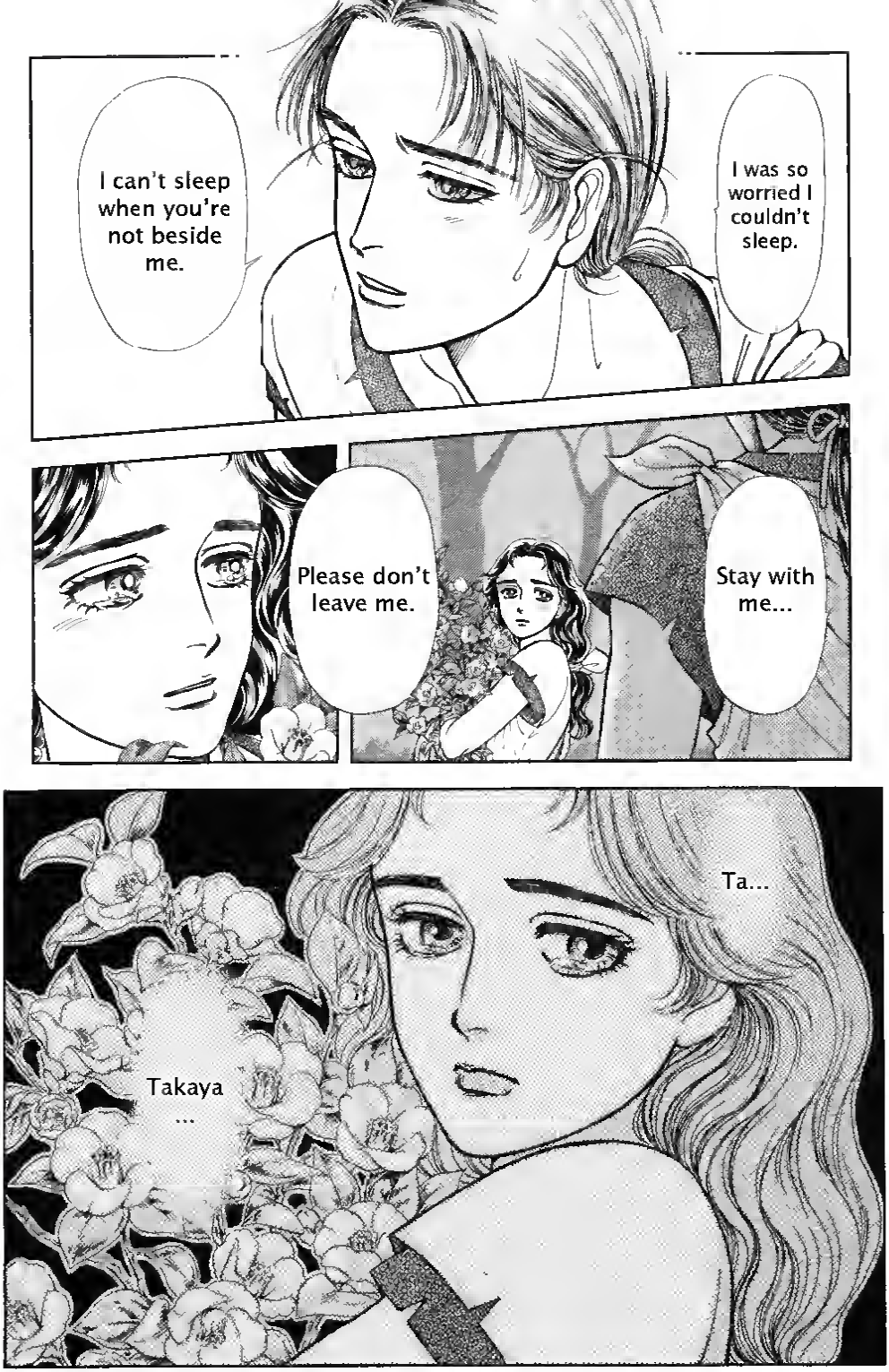
I'm sure I can do it!

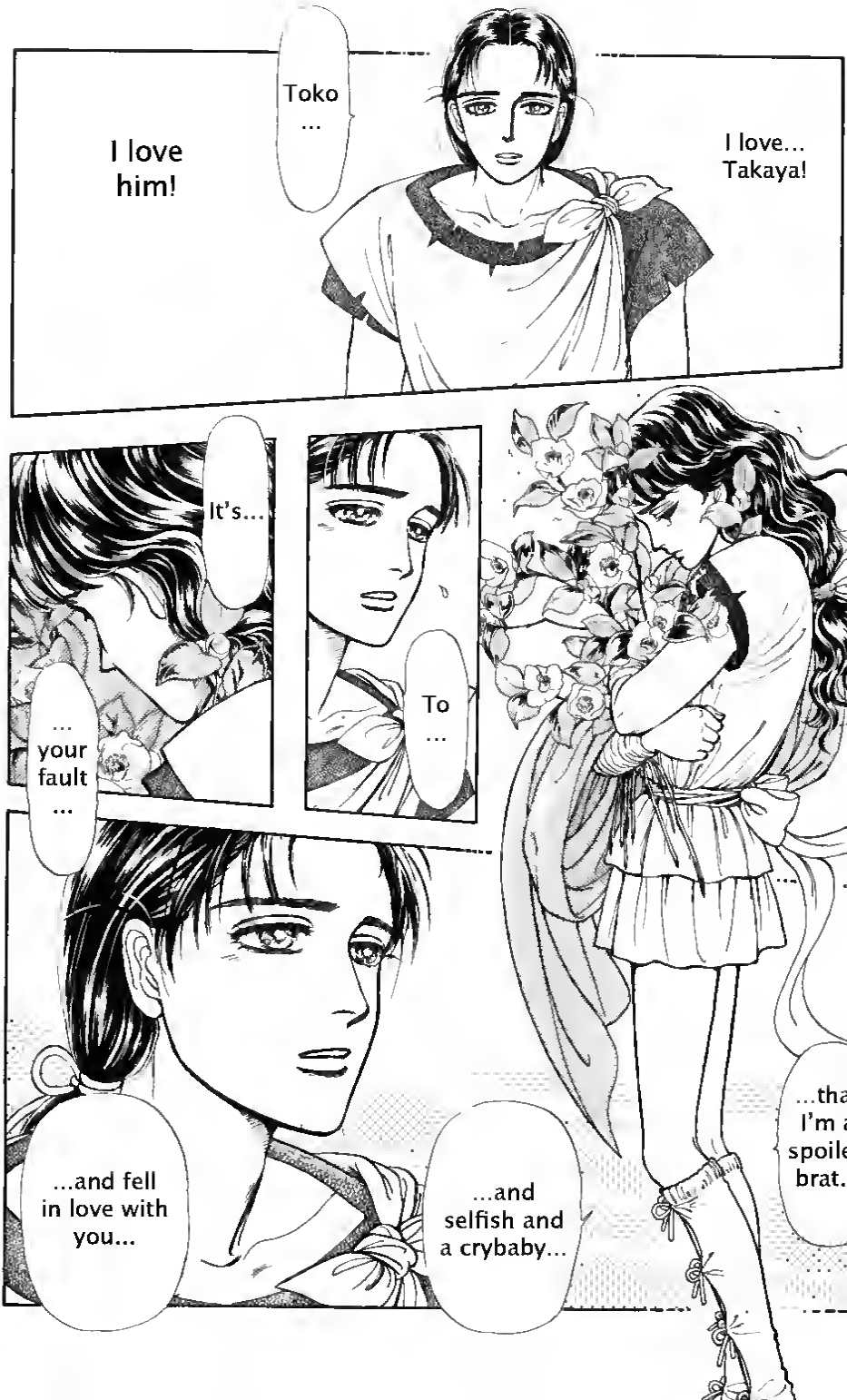
I'll learn how to do it!

He's fast ...
Alone at this hour!
Toko!


These flowers must have been left by Takaya...
Kind to everyone...
He's so kind...
I'm sure Takaya will save my poor twin.
I'm sure he will be kind to her too...
Toko!


...and ran into the lookout.
PANT
PANT
PANT
PANT
I was worried ...
Really worried for some reason. I went to check on you...
I have to tell him...
Toko...
PANT
Sor... ry.
Taka-ya...
Smile... and say... "Sorry"...


I can't sleep when you're not beside me.
I was so worried I couldn't sleep.
Please don't leave me.
Stay with me...
Takaya ...
Ta...


I love him!
Toko ...
I love... Takaya!
It's...
... your fault ...
To ...
...and fell in love with you...
...and selfish and a crybaby...
...that I'm a spoiled brat...

Because you're always there for me...
It's all your fault.
Don't cry...
A-always...
Please don't cry, Toko...!
Always...
GASP

Ah ...
Something seems strange over by the main camp!
Th... that girl...

Don't tell me...
...the demon gods ...
It's that girl!
What !?
I can tell!
That girl is getting closer!
Wha...

So Kiyu...!?
We're not supposed to meet.

If we meet again...

...I'll kill you!

End of Part I

Itihasa 3

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